

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Coal bosses' greed leads to rising death toll

— PAGE 5

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VOL. 64 NO. 6 FEBRUARY 14, 2000

Protests kick off campaign by dairy farmers

BY TONY PRINCE

SOUTH PYMATUNING, Pennsylvania—Dairy farmers in the Northeast held coordinated actions February 1 to protest the low prices they are receiving for milk. Prices have fallen 39 percent since September, hitting \$9.79 per hundredweight, or about 11.6 gallons. Such low prices have not been seen since 1978 when they hit \$9.90 and are below the cost of production.

The actions by hard-pressed and determined farmers, which targeted processing companies, included picket lines, blockades, and press conferences.

"Milk the Cow, Not the Farmer!" was the slogan on one of the signs carried by about 75 farmers and supporters protesting outside the Dean Foods milk processing plant in western Pennsylvania. The farmers were protesting low prices they receive for milk. The action here was one of 10 that took place in Pennsylvania, New York, and Wisconsin. The farmers set up a picket line at the entrance to Dean Foods in the presence of a number of police and county sheriffs. Mike Logan, who has 70 cows, gets a \$1 quality premium, receiving between \$10 and \$11 per hundredweight. He explained that "a year ago we got \$19." Both Scribbs and Logan estimated their cost of production at about \$18.50. Scribbs explained the situation farmers face having to sell their products to only one processor. "I sell to Dean

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Puerto Ricans protest plans to bomb Vieques

BY RON RICHARDS

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico—"We continue to demand 'Not one more bomb', as we have from the beginning," said Ismael Guadalupe, a leader of the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques. "We reject the agreement between the U.S. government and the government of Puerto Rico."

Guadalupe, speaking in a phone interview from Vieques, was referring to the January 31 announcement by the pro-statehood governor of Puerto Rico, Pedro Rosselló, that he had agreed to a deal with the Clinton administration to allow the U.S. Navy to resume bombing practice in March on that Puerto Rican island.

A protest has been called in San Juan for February 21 demanding the U.S. Navy leave the island. Organizers are appealing to unions, students, religious groups, and others to join the action.

In the United States, a demonstration supporting the fight against the U.S. Navy will take place February 16 in Washington, D.C.

Since April of last year, when David Sanes, a civilian security guard working for the Navy, was killed by an "off-course" bomb from a U.S. warplane, there has been an unprecedented outpouring of protests throughout Puerto Rico demanding the Pentagon cease its 60 years of using Vieques for bombing practice.

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Dockworkers defend union in Charleston

Rally, fund for framed-up workers answer government

BY DON PANE

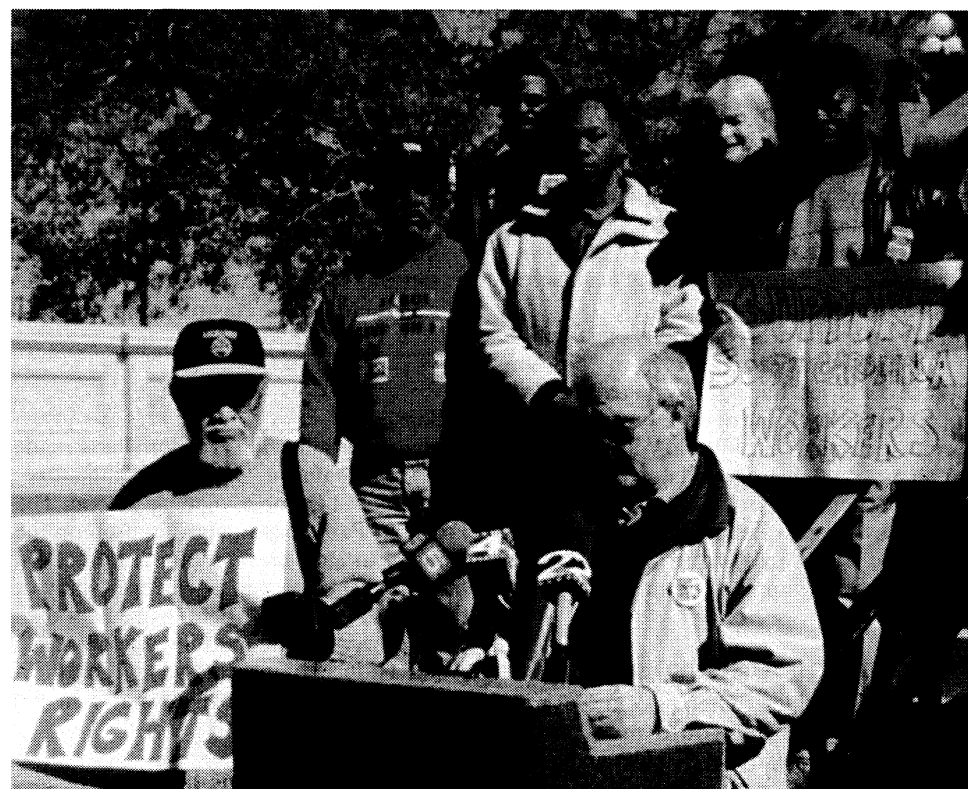
CHARLESTON, South Carolina—Community support continues to grow for the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) members here who are under attack by the shipping line Nordana, the local cops, and the state government.

ILA members have been picketing at the port to protest the use of nonunion labor by the shipping line. A massive police mobilization January 20 turned into a cop riot when longshoremen held a march to the waterfront. Eight union members were charged with inciting to riot, but the charges were dropped later in face of widespread support for the workers. A court order was also handed down limiting the number of pickets to 19, and prosecutors are now threatening to drag workers before a grand jury.

At a February 2 news conference organized by the South Carolina Progressive Network and held in front of the U.S. customs building, a number of speakers pledged their support to the ILA.

George Hopkins, with the Carolina Alliance for Fair Employment, moderated the well-attended news conference. Rev. Joe Darby, vice-president of the local NAACP, denounced the media for smearing union members as thugs. Tommy Crenshaw, president of the Charleston Central Labor Council, criticized the state legislature's current efforts to strengthen the state's antilabor "right-to-work" law.

In response to the dropping of the charges of inciting to riot, Leonard Riley, one of the previously arrested longshoremen, said that



Militant/Don Pane

February 2 press conference backing longshoremen's struggle. Speaking is Tommy Crenshaw, the head of the Charleston Area Central Labor Council.

those arrested "were framed." The prosecutors "failed to prove anything. But they plan to get us indicted by an upcoming grand jury. The frame-up is not over yet."

At the union hall, longshoreman Harry

Lincoln said, "They are just trying to bust the union through 'right-to-work' legislation. That wasn't a riot," he said, referring to the battle on the waterfront. "It was a con-

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Nonunion workers strike Perdue chicken plant in North Carolina

BY ELENA TATE AND STU SINGER

LEWISTON, North Carolina—"I'm not scared of Frank Perdue, or his son Jim," said Raymond Dian, an eviscerator at the Per-

due poultry plant after a five-day strike that shut down most production in the large facility.

Dian and hundreds of other workers among the 2,500 at the nonunion plant

walked off the job to protest arbitrary disciplining of employees by the bosses, and denial of pay for the Martin Luther King, Jr., holiday. It was the most sustained and unified strike action ever taken at the plant, located here in this rural area about 95 miles south of Newport News, Virginia.

"I had never been on strike before," said Patrice Grissom, a deboner. "But I'm ready to go back out. It was amazing and fun. It feels kind of good to be an example for other workers. I would have liked to have kept together and stayed out the rest of the week." Both Dian and Grissom were eager to tell their stories after their first days back at work.

Day shift workers in the cooler department led the walkout on Friday morning January 21 after they received their paychecks. A worker involved in a drive now taking place to win union recognition described in detail what happened. He asked that his name not be used for fear of victimization by the company. Workers are now signing cards for an election to bring in the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) union. The UFCW failed to win enough votes to secure recognition after two previous organizing efforts.

"We walked out and were followed by the workers in the weight, price and label department," he said, "and then the workers

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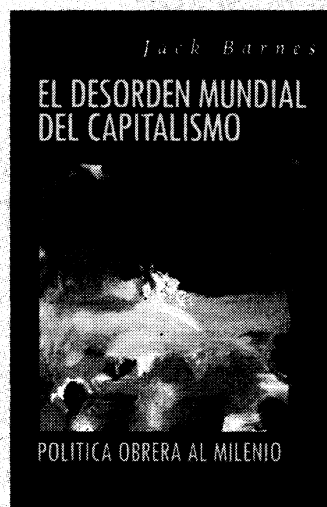
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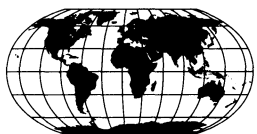
Jack Barnes

"The capitalist rulers offer us social disaster. They offer us depression. They offer us death from curable disease. They offer us war. They offer us fascism. They offer us an unending list of horrors. But we offer ourselves the ability to prevent those horrors from becoming the final reality, the confidence that we can transform that future."

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Joining vanguard militants, building proletarian party — page 8



Japan bankruptcies a record

Economic recession continues to plague Japan as personal bankruptcies hit record levels, rising 50 percent between 1997 and 1999. Last year, the number of bankruptcy claims climbed to 110,000 in the first 11 months, topping the 103,803 claims filed in 1998.

Mounting bad debt has marked the Japanese economy over the past several years. Government officials estimate the debt could soar to more than 130 percent next year. At the beginning of 1999 banks in the country held some \$1 trillion in bad loans. Meanwhile, unemployment is higher than at any time since World War II.

Japan's oil plans on the rocks

Japan's capitalist rulers are growing nervous about the country's oil supply after government officials failed to secure an agreement to extend drilling rights to the Khafji oil field in Saudi Arabia. Officials from Tokyo's Ministry of International Trade and Industry flew to Saudi Arabia in mid-January to renew the contract that expires on February 27 on Japan's largest oil field. The Saudi rulers rejected Tokyo's offer to build a \$2 billion railway in exchange for the drilling rights.

Tokyo imports nearly all of its oil supply, of which 85 percent comes from Middle Eastern countries. Lack of raw materials was a primary factor that drove the Japanese rulers into the slaughter of World War II. Washington prepared its imperialist military confrontation with Tokyo by cutting off Japanese access to petroleum, iron ore, aluminum, and other raw materials in Latin America, the Philippines, Malaysia, India, and elsewhere.

Fascist to join Austrian gov't

Austrian president Thomas Klestil said January 27 that he would meet with ultrarightist politician Joerg Haider and Foreign Minister Wolfgang Schuessel in early February to discuss forming a new government. Klestil announced the decision after negotiations to renew the 13-year coalition between the Social Democratic party and Schuessel's Austrian People's Party

Basque freedom fight polarizes Spain



Masked participants in a January 15 protest of thousands, held in the northern Spanish city of Bilbao, calling for release of Basque political prisoners from French and Spanish jails. The following weekend there was a demonstration of 10,000 supporting Basque independence in Pamplona, and a Madrid march that reportedly drew a million people protesting a fatal bombing that the government blamed on the pro-independence organization ETA (Basque Homeland and Freedom). Late last year ETA announced the end of a 14-month cease-fire after negotiations stalled when Madrid demanded concessions. Self-determination is widely supported in the Basque country, which straddles the border of France and Spain.

collapsed.

Haider's right-wing Freedom Party made the biggest gains in Austria's parliamentary elections last October, placing second. The Freedom Party's campaign focused on the demand to stop immigration and attacked the established parties as corrupt. Many of the themes in Haider's demagoguery are rooted in the Nazi Austrian tradition going back to Adolf Hitler. His parents were deeply involved in the German Nazi party in the 1930s and 40s.

Rape of Nanjing at issue

In several cities in China and Japan protests have condemned a January 23 Osaka conference organized by rightists, titled "The Verification of the Rape of Nanjing: The Biggest Lie of the 20th Century."

Around 500 came to the conference in the Japanese city of Osaka to hear the professor of history at Tokyo's Asia University claim that "there was no massacre of civilians at Nanjing." Many right-wing groups and academics in Japan campaign on that theme. "Nanjing is an undeniable fact," read a banner carried by 100 protesters nearby. Survivors of the massacre gathered in Nanjing to denounce the meeting. Protests also occurred in the Chinese cities of Shenyang and Hong Kong.

Nanjing, the capital of China at the time, was the second city overrun by the Japanese army in its invasion of China in late 1937. The orgy of looting, execution, and rape that followed the city's fall has entered history as the Massacre, or Rape, of Nanjing. Historians commonly put the death toll at 300,000 and the number of women raped at 20,000, but some estimate the figures are much higher. The Japanese government claims these figures are exaggerated.

Euro drops below parity

The euro fell to a record low of 98 cents January 27 pushing down bond prices to new lows. "Investors sold off their European bonds in droves as the dollar value of the assets dwindled," noted London's *Financial Times*. "Europe is simply not attracting enough investors." In the first 10 months of 1999 there was a net outflow of \$99 billion, the financial daily reported.

The currency has lost 17 percent of its initial value against the U.S. dollar after 11

governments in Europe began using it as a common currency last year to denominate stock, bond, and banking transactions. The weakened euro reflects stiffening competition from U.S. capitalist investors against their imperialist competitors in Europe who created the currency union as a rival to the U.S. dollar.

Algerian rulers attacks rebels

Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika sent paratroopers, infantry units, and helicopters into a guerrilla base in the Relizane province six days after issuing an ultimatum for the rebels to surrender or face "eradication" in a "fight without mercy." The Bouteflika regime seeks to crush the remaining forces of an Islamic insurgency in a civil war that has left some 100,000 people killed.

The war has its roots in 1992 when Paris, the country's former colonial ruler, collaborated with the regime in Algiers to annul the national elections won by the Islamic Salvation Front, a bourgeois opposition party that promised to be less subservient to the French imperialists. After a military junta took control in Algeria, the French government supplied the new regime with attack helicopters and other war materiel.

Lima peasants fight landowners

Homeless peasants defended themselves against attacks by landowners in the Villa El Salvador district of the Peruvian capital of Lima on January 27. The landowners organized armed thugs to try to expel "squatters" who had built shacks on a 124-acre stretch of land during the previous week. Gunfire took four lives, but the peasants fought back with rocks. President Alberto Fujimori said that police would not act to clear the land. Villa El Salvador was founded in 1971 by about 200 families from Lima's slums and shantytowns, who seized a piece of government-owned land. The district's numbers have swelled as tens of thousands of peasants from the Andes have migrated to the city in search of work. Such events are common in the shantytowns that circle Lima, although it is unusual for private land to be seized.

N.Y. cops raid homeless shelters

New York cops raided the city's homeless shelters in the pre-dawn hours of January 19, arresting at least 125 men and women. Spokespeople for the city's Department of Homeless Services defended the action, stating that those arrested had failed to appear in court after being summoned on minor charges. The arrests would ensure "a safe environment," said the officials. Mayor Rudolph Giuliani recently ordered police to arrest homeless people sleeping in the streets. In October last year he announced that shelters would be closed to those not prepared to accept work, a policy that sparked several protests.

— PATRICK O'NEILL

THE MILITANT

For a united Irish republic

"Unionism as we have known it is finished," says Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams. The fight to end British rule and military occupation of Northern Ireland has forced divisions among pro-British unionists and concessions from Westminster. Read firsthand reports of this ongoing struggle in the 'Militant' newspaper.



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Editor: GREG McCARTAN

Young Socialists column editor:

CECILIA ORTEGA

Business Manager: MAURICE WILLIAMS

Editorial Staff: Hilda Cuzco, Martin Koppel, Brian Taylor, Brian Williams, and Maurice Williams.

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Miami pickets say return child to Cuba

BY MIKE ITALIE

MIAMI—Nearly 200 protesters joined a picket line and rally across from the Immigration and Naturalization Service building here January 29 to call for the return of six-year-old Elián González to his father in Cuba.

Most signs and chants demanded, "Send Elián home." A dozen pickets carried signs that also condemned the U.S. embargo of Cuba, demanded normalization of relations with Cuba, and called for lifting U.S. travel restrictions to the island. One sign read, "The blame is on Washington."

Andrés Gómez of the Antonio Maceo Brigade chaired the rally. He denounced U.S. government authorities for failing to enforce the January 4 INS ruling that the boy should be repatriated, saying, "We are here to defend one of the most fundamental of human rights: the right of a kid to live with his family."

The rally was called by the National Committee to Return Elián to His Father in Cuba. Pastors for Peace and the International Action Center were among the main national organizations that called the action. The big majority of those at the rally had participated in previous activities opposing Washington's economic war against Cuba.

The protest was also organized by the Miami-based Antonio Maceo Brigade, the Alliance of Workers of the Cuban Community, and the Coalition to End the Economic Embargo on Cuba. Nearly 100 people from Dade County, including a few dozen Cubans, took part. Another 50 came from several Florida cities, including Fort Lauderdale, Orlando, Tampa, West Palm Beach, Gainesville, and Jacksonville.

The rest of the participants traveled from as far as Maine, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York. Richard Campbell of Fort Lauderdale, who is originally from Jamaica and spent four years studying in Santiago, Cuba, explained why he came to the rally. "The U.S. is taking away the right of a family to stay together. [Cuban president] Fidel Castro is not separating families; it's the U.S. that's doing that," he said. "Why didn't they give Elián's mother a visa

so she wouldn't die in that boat?"

Elián González's mother and 10 others drowned last November when the boat in which they were traveling from Cuba sank. They were trying to come to the United States in a trip organized by a smuggler. The boy's father, Juan González, immediately asked for his son's return to Cuba, as did all of his grandparents.

Alicia Rodríguez, an elementary school principal who came from Cuba at the age of 13, heard about the rally from a fax a friend sent her. She noted that a number of people feel intimidated by Cuban rightists in Miami, but that she felt confident in expressing her view in this case because "a lot of Cubans in both Cuba and the United States want him sent back." Disagreeing with the idea that right-wing Cubans in Miami drive U.S. policy toward Cuba, Rodríguez stated, "When the U.S. government wants to it can enforce its own laws. He should have been sent back right away."

Lucius Walker, director of Pastors for Peace, said at the rally that the central demand of such protests should be the return of Elián González to his father. Walker said the case "is fundamentally a child welfare issue. It's not about politics. Some say he'll have no freedom in Cuba—that is not the issue. It is an issue of family values."

Walker invited the "beautiful police," dozens of whom were stationed in front of the INS building, to support the main demand. He concluded that protests to demand the boy be returned to his father "has brought together a wide range of people—Democrats, Republicans, Blacks, Cubans, and police."

Walker also stated that holding the rally in Miami with participation from many other cities would tear down a "curtain of fear" built by right-wing Cubans in Miami. Teresa Gutierrez, speaking for the National Committee to Return Elián to His Father in Cuba, and Morisseau Lazarre of the Haiti Support Network, both from New York, said that more Haitians and others would have attended the rally if not for the intimidation of right-wing Cubans.

Luis Miranda, a leader of the New York-based Casa de las Americas, expressed a dif-

ferent point of view. It's not the right-wing in Miami that is the problem in the unceasing U.S. aggression against Cuba and in keeping the six-year-old away from his country and his immediate family, said Miranda. "These people are satellites. Washington is responsible. It is the Clinton administration." Miranda praised defenders of the Cuban revolution in Miami for their long record of openly carrying out political work here.

Other speakers included Luis Galaurza of the Puerto Rico Cultural Center in Chicago, Gloria de Riva of the International Action Center in San Francisco, and Maura Barrios of Cuba Va in Tampa. Speaking for the Miami Coalition to End the Economic Embargo of Cuba, Rollande Girard stated that the group has carried out many activities in Miami to broaden opposition to the U.S. government's "cold war" against Cuba.

"We demand the immediate repatriation of Elián," she said. "And we know that the fight over this case has everything to do with the U.S. government's hostility toward the Cuban people and their revolutionary government."

At the same time as the picket outside the INS building, about 200 women, mostly Cuban-Americans dressed in black and white, stopped traffic in downtown Miami. They said they marched in memory of Elizabeth Groton, Elián's deceased mother, and



Militant/Eric Simpson
Some 200 people at rally in Miami demand return of González boy and defend Cuban revolution.

pressed for keeping the Cuban boy with his distant relatives in Miami. Later in the day about 50 boats cruised around Biscayne Bay with Cuban and U.S. flags and signs reading, "Elián, we'll fight for your rights." It was sponsored by the Democracy Movement, a group of rightist Cubans here.

Ecuadoran gov't tries to quell unrest after revolt

BY HILDA CUZCO

In a move to prevent a repetition of last week's popular rebellion in Ecuador that ousted president Jamil Mahuad, the new government of Gustavo Noboa began to prosecute those involved in the action.

Far from being intimidated, the indigenous movement and workers organizations have gained strength to continue their fight for justice and have reaffirmed they are ready to mobilize again. While the Noboa government announced its plans to proceed to replace the country's currency, the sucre, with the U.S. dollar, unions and popular organizations united under the Patriotic Front (FP) have scheduled demonstrations starting February 2 to voice their opposition to "dollarization" and the selling off of state enterprises to capitalist concerns, namely the oil and electricity companies.

The FP has also decided to oppose prosecution of the military colonels arrested for their actions in allowing protesters, led by indigenous organizations, to occupy Congress and bring down the Mahuad government. After the occupation, the military announced a three-person junta that included a leader of the indigenous people, but after Mahuad fled it quickly turned power over to Noboa, who was the vice-president.

So far 13 colonels are in custody awaiting trial on charges of sedition and conspiring against the constitutional order. Another 300 officers are under investigation. The president of the federation of courthouse employees, Juan José Castelló, and two other leaders of the Popular Democratic Movement (MFD)—an opposition political party—have also been charged for their participation in the revolt. Luis Villacís, the president of the FP, said demonstrations demanding the release of all the arrested, and for changes in the economy, will continue.

Antonio Vargas, president of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), was also summoned, but there have not been any other steps to arrest him so far. "I am here showing my face," said the indigenous leader. "If for fighting against corruption, against misery, and hunger they take me to prison, I will go."

The rebellion was fueled by the impact of the world capitalist economic crisis on the semicolonial country of Ecuador, and its devastating consequences for working people. Over the past several years the value

of the sucre dropped by almost 300 percent and purchasing power shrank from \$160 to \$37, while wages increased no more than 10 percent.

The cost of public utilities skyrocketed. For example, the price of water went up 400 percent. Electricity and telephone services rose an equal amount. The banking system collapsed in 1998-99 as the largest banks in the country went bankrupt and were taken over by the state. Deposits in the banks, around \$4 billion, were frozen after capitalists pulled some \$6 billion from the country. At the same time, the country reached the highest inflation index in Latin America at 60 percent.

CONAIE president Vargas told reporters they were seeking alliances with other social sectors that may work out better than the betrayal they faced with the military. "We now have a much stronger alliance with other groups of civil society," he said. "We have created parliaments in all the provinces, which is what gives us unity." The parliaments are open to other social groups that want a change in the country.

In addition to the general economic crisis, the brutal treatment and pervasive discrimination faced by the indigenous population was a spur to the protests.

César Umajinga, president of the Cotopaxi Indigenous and Peasant Movement, voiced his opposition to years of government disregard for their communities. "If this system is not changed in the next five years, then you are going to see our people take up arms," he said.

Many indigenous people work 12-hour days tilling small plots of the worst land. Comprising one-third of the 12 million people in Ecuador, they are treated as second-class citizens and driven off their land to the cities. Eighty-three percent of Indians in rural areas, mainly in the highlands, live in poverty, compared to 46 percent of other Ecuadorians. Only 41 percent have access to potable water, 87 percent of Indian homes lack toilets, and 44 percent have no electricity.

According to a Cedatus-Gallup poll taken after the coup, 71 percent of the population is against prosecution of the indigenous and popular leaders who participated in the January 21 rebellion. The poll involved more than 270,000 people in Quito, Cuenca, Manta, Guayaquil, and Portoviejo.

Two socialist workers join the 'Militant' staff

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

The *Militant* announces several staff changes with this issue. Greg McCartan has been named editor of the paper and Brian Williams is joining the writing staff. The paper's current editor, Naomi Craine, and staff writer Argiris Malapanis, are leaving for other parts of the United States to build and win recruits to the communist movement.

McCartan, 42, has moved from Boston, where he was a textile worker and member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE). The Socialist Workers Party organizes its members who are garment and textile workers in a national fraction in the union, and he is the organizer of the fraction's steering committee. McCartan is also a member of the party's Trade Union Committee.

McCartan previously served on the *Militant* staff starting in 1989 and was editor of the paper from 1990 to 1992. He served as national director of the Socialist Workers election campaign in 1992 and 1996. Staff writer Brian Williams, 48, has moved from Washington, D.C., where he was a member of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) at the Bethlehem Steel mill outside of Baltimore. Williams is the organizer of the national fraction steering committee of socialist workers in the USWA.

Williams is also doing a second stint on the staff. He joined the staff in 1991 and left in 1994 to build the communist movement in Washington.

Responding to political opportunities

Naomi Craine will be joining a team of socialists establishing an organizing committee of the party in the Carolinas. The SWP and YS are responding to a

growing proletarian movement in the cities and countryside, which has many manifestations of resistance across the South. Craine will report on developments in South Carolina where members of the International Longshoremen's Association are fighting to defend their union. The socialists are also following up on other recent labor struggles in that region, which include the successful yearlong strike for a contract by Continental General Tire workers in Charlotte, North Carolina, and the victory by shipyard workers in Newport News, Virginia, who won a pay hike and improved pensions.

Prior to coming on the *Militant* staff in 1992, Craine was a textile worker and an active socialist in the trade union movement in North Carolina. She has written several articles for the paper about various textile organizing drives in the South. Textile workers at the Fieldcrest Cannon mill in Kannapolis, North Carolina, scored a victory last year when a majority of the work force voted to join UNITE after 25 years of unionizing efforts.

Staff writer Argiris Malapanis is en route to Miami, to join socialists there in deepening their work in the city's large garment work force and other industrial workers, among farmers in the state, and with farm workers. Miami is also a city with deep political connections with the Cuban revolution and a major gateway to the struggles of workers and farmers throughout Latin America.

Prior to joining the *Militant* staff in 1991, Malapanis participated in union activity and farm protests in the Midwest. He has been an editor of the *Militant*, and traveled to Cuba, the Middle East, and the Balkans to cover political developments for the paper.

Los Angeles events discuss womens' liberation

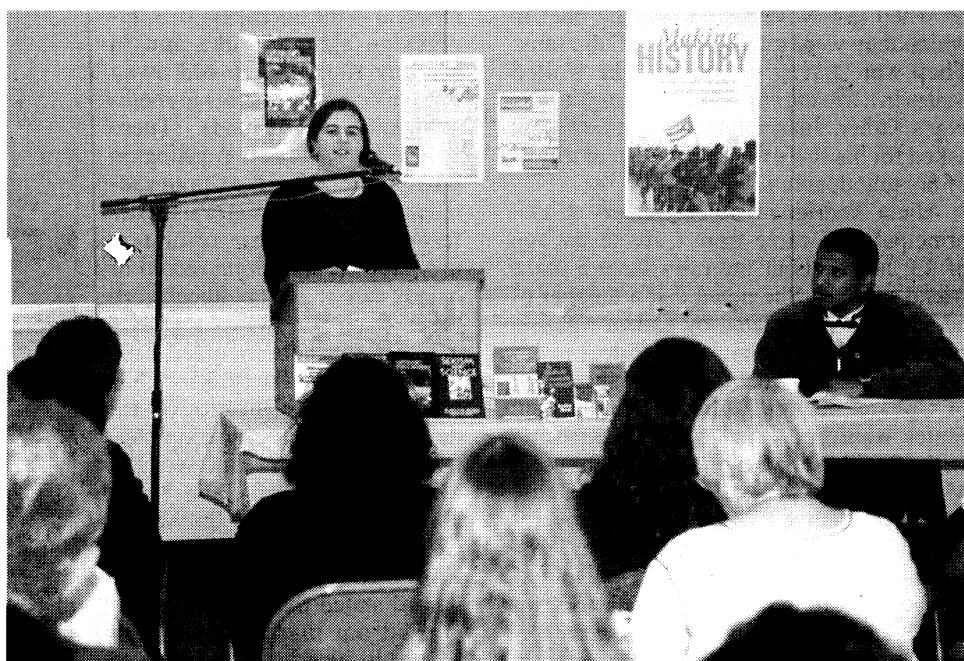
This column is written and edited by the Young Socialists (YS), an international organization of young workers, students, and other youth fighting for socialism. For more information about the YS write to: Young Socialists, 3284 23rd St., San Francisco, CA 94110. Tel: (415) 824-1429. Email: 105162.605@compuserve.com

BY SHEM MORTON

LOS ANGELES—Over the weekend of January 14–15, the Young Socialists in Los Angeles took part in a Militant Labor Forum on the origins of women's oppression, a "Meet the Young Socialists" event, and a class on the fight for women's liberation.

The forum was given by Samantha Kern, a Young Socialists leader from San Francisco. Thirty-two people attended Kern's presentation, which opened up an interesting discussion. One participant asked the speaker whether a solution to the exploitation of a woman's body was to equally exploit the male body in advertising and posters.

Most participants did not agree that "equal gender" exploitation resolved the problem of women's exploitation. Other participants stressed that women's liberation and equality can only be won through revolutionary struggle led in part by women



YS leader Samantha Kern speaks at January 14–15 educational event in Los Angeles

workers and farmers.

Another interesting question was whether it is progressive to pay "housewives" a wage. The speaker and other participants explained that this is a tactic used by right-wing forces

such as Patrick Buchanan to drive women back into the home and out of the work force.

The second day of the weekend the Los Angeles Young Socialists hosted a meeting

to explain the purpose, strategies, and goals of the Young Socialists. Three new young people took part in this meeting. Some of the main topics of discussion were how Young Socialists at the meeting first became open to revolutionary politics; the upcoming activities of the YS, including a team of YS members going to the Martin Luther King Day demonstration in Atlanta, Georgia, and the King Day events in Oxnard and Los Angeles; and organizing support for Omari Musa's Socialist Workers campaign for Oakland City Council.

Later that day Samantha Kern kicked off a class on the origins of the oppression of women. The class was a continuation of the discussion period from the forum the previous night. Twelve people attended, including two new youth, and there was further discussion on the topic of the presentation of male bodies in advertising and elsewhere as a means to combat oppression of women.

The role of the communist movement in presenting a scientific explanation of the origins of women's oppression in class society, and in championing the struggle for the liberation of women was also discussed. By the end of the weekend the Young Socialists in Los Angeles were able to establish a chapter. The weekend was a great success and better equipped YS members for the battles to come.

Musa campaign in Oakland raises socialist perspective

BY BERNIE SENTER

OAKLAND, California—"We are living in good times, good times that will get better for those who want to fight," stated Omari Musa, Socialist Workers Party candidate for city council in Oakland. Musa was speaking at a January 22 campaign rally.

Musa pointed to the struggle of the indigenous peoples in Ecuador against the deep capitalist crisis that led to the ouster of President Jamil Mahuad. "Imperialism has crises all over the world," he said. Musa saluted the struggle of Puerto Ricans to end U.S. military bombing of the island of

Vieques. He described Puerto Rico as "a colony of the United States fighting for national patrimony and identity as a people."

"In Indonesia, from one end of the archipelago to the other, there's a struggle going on," he continued. "And British imperialism has its problems in Ireland where the

people want to up the heat." Musa is a member of United Transportation Union Local 239 and works for Union Pacific Railroad.

Cochairing the rally was Denise Alvarado from the Comité '98. "I chose to support Omari because he has chosen to support us," she said. "The campaign to free Puerto Rican political prisoners has had tremendous support from some of you here." Alvarado talked about how inspiring it was for the 11 Puerto Rican political prisoners to be freed last year. "We still have people in prison we are trying to get out," said Alvarado, who had just returned from a tour of Vieques.

Also cochairing the rally was Jason Alessio from the Young Socialists. Alessio explained that the central goal of the YS "is to participate in struggles going on around the world, establish a workers and farmers government, and abolish capitalism. We follow the lines of resistance of struggling working people in the United States and around the world."

Alessio talked about the Martin Luther King day march in Atlanta, Georgia, that he participated in along with a contingent of Black farmers. "They are waging a fight against the U.S. government, which because of racism is not providing the farmers loans and subsidies," he said. The following day, Alessio went to Columbia, South Carolina, to join in discussions with those who attended the march of 46,000 to oppose flying the battle flag of the Confederate army atop the state capitol. Alessio has also walked the picket line with striking Overnite truckers in Sacramento.

Willie Cotton, from the Young Socialists in Tucson, Arizona, talked about the struggle of 250 tomato farm workers in Wilcox, Arizona. "Acres of greenhouses, 115 degrees, picking for eight hours," are the conditions under which 250 labor. They walked off the job for a week after the growers insisted they pick more for the same or lower wage.

Musa discussed why the campaign was opposed to the Youth Crime Initiative, which will be on the March ballot when the city council election takes place. The purpose of the initiative is to "deepen the criminalization of youth," said Musa. "They treat youth like they are all in gangs, but the biggest gang wears dark blue uniforms, has badges, and carries guns. The initiative seeks to deepen hostility and division among working people and deepens attacks on democratic rights by allowing every young person to be tried as an adult." Five hundred young people who are against this initiative turned out for the Martin Luther King Day march in Oakland.

New England fishermen oppose new restrictions

BY TED LEONARD

DANVERS, Massachusetts—"I'm just recovering from the five months of closures [of fishing grounds] last year. We are not trying to be millionaires, we just want to live. Five mouths depend on my catch," said Gloucester fisherman Paul Vitale at a meeting of the New England Fishery Management Council here.

Some 200 people, mostly fishermen from Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine, attended a January 19 hearing to defend the interests of individual working fishermen, as the council readied its ruling on management measures for cod fishing in the coming year. Small fishermen have borne the brunt of measures to replenish the cod stock in the Gulf of Maine, the body of water off the New England coast that stretches from Cape Cod to Maine. Limits on the size of catch, number of fishing days allowed, and the areas open to fishermen have driven many out of business.

For example, a few years ago the maximum daily catch per fisherman was 1,000 pounds; today it is 400. Certain areas of the Gulf of Maine are closed to cod fishing five months of the year. The areas targeted for closure by the council have been those closest to shore where fishermen with smaller boats operate.

Prior to the meeting, Paul Cohan, a fish-

erman from Gloucester and president of the Gulf of Maine Fisherman's Alliance, said they would push to keep the regulations as they are now, since other options included further restrictions. "Every single year they throw a few more restrictions on you," he said. "But you don't take 300 years of fishing pressure and neutralize it in a five-year span without basically shutting down the whole show, and there are people that would have that happen."

Backed by U.S. government statistics, the Gulf of Maine Fisherman's Alliance explained in a statement that with the measures already put in place a few years earlier "we are seeing a dramatic turnaround in the status of many stocks. Most noteworthy is the 21 percent increase in a stock of immediate concern, Gulf of Maine Cod."

More recent measures, the statement said, "have obviously been beneficial, however, their effects are yet to be evaluated due to 'data lag.' This lack of current quantification clearly leaves us shooting in the dark as more restrictions are blindly developed and implemented."

"Unless we act now to correct some of the deficiencies of our current policies," the statement continued, "we will lose the traditional New England Inshore Family Fisherman and all the cultural and economic fabric of our coastal tapestry."

Kevin Scolia, a fisherman from Marshfield, Massachusetts, said that during the area closures last spring he did make-shift jobs to provide for his family. "I picked up cans. I got a job banging nails to buy my kid sneakers," Scolia told the council, adding he "hadn't had a new pair of sneakers in four years."

Arguing against an option that would add another month of closure in an area vital to the inshore fisherman, Scolia noted it is "another nail in our coffin. Everything has been targeting the inshore fisherman. Tell us face to face if you're trying to run us out."

This mounting pressure forces fishermen to take life-threatening risks. John Rosa, from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, took his boat 70 miles out to sea Christmas day—a day when there would be no one at sea to respond to a distress call, but also a time when the price of pollock, usually around 70 cents a pound goes up to nearly \$1.80 a pound.

Two days after Christmas the Coast Guard rescued Rosa when his transmission went out and 14-to-18-foot waves were pushing him farther out to sea as his boat was taking in water. To save money he had not taken a crew member with him. During the 14 hours it took the Coast Guard to tow him to shore he stayed with his uninsured boat.

The council defeated a motion to recommend that the National Marine Fisheries Service maintain the status quo. They instead decided to close three areas in the Gulf of Maine for an additional month if 50 percent of the total catch limit was caught before July 31. Fishermen at the meeting said the trigger point would be hit.

The council also voted to allow party and charter boats to fish in the closed areas three months out of the year. Fishermen often point out the double standard applied by the council to them and businesses that operate party and charter operations.

The Gulf of Maine Fisherman's Alliance is planning a "Big money raffle and auction" at the Elks Club in Gloucester the evening of February 18 to "Help Support Our Local Fishermen."

Ted Leonard is a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees.

Bernie Senter is an airline worker and a member of International Association of Machinists Local 1781.

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Workers respond to book in Carolinas

The campaign to promote *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium* has been extended until March 15. This week we are running reports from sales teams in Charleston and North Carolina.

BY DON PANE

CHARLESTON, South Carolina—Three copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder*, 129 *Militants*, and 1 *Militant* subscription were sold by a *Militant* sales and reporting team here.

Fifty-five International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) members bought the paper at the union hall on February 2, as they picked up their paychecks. One longshoreman also decided to purchase a copy of *Capitalism's World Disorder*. The *Militant's* headline backing the dockworkers' struggle was welcomed by many.

Adrienne McNeil, a young dockworker, told salespeople, "I believe the State Port Authority should recognize that the ILA makes this port what it is today. They are helping some employers use nonunion labor in the middle of the night to unload ships."



Militant/Don Pane
Discussing political and union questions with workers in South Carolina.

"We are going to fight and we are going to be victorious," she said.

At a literature table outside the student union of the University of Charleston, two copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder* were sold to students who also signed up on the mailing list for more information about the Young Socialists. One *Militant* subscription and 18 single issues were sold to the students, most of whom thought the dockworkers were getting a bum rap in the local media coverage.

Members of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) at Georgetown Steel likened what happened to the longshoremen as similar to what the cops did to them during their strike a few years ago. Georgetown Steel is a basic steel mill with more than 500 workers, 95 percent of whom belong to the union in this "right-to-work" state. At an afternoon shift change 35 steelworkers purchased a copy of the paper.

One of the USWA members suggested that the team do a sale at the Alcoa Aluminum plant in Goose Creek, where he thought the USWA had recently won a union vote. We followed his advice the next morning.

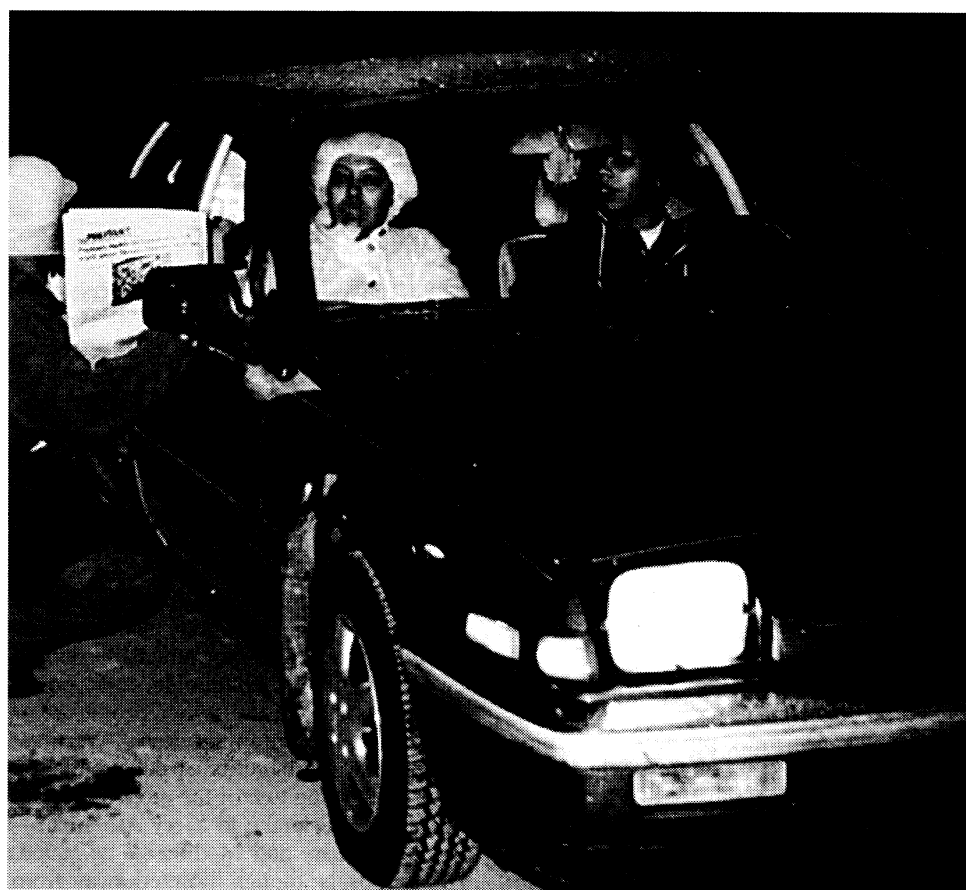
Some 700 Alcoa workers have not yet won union recognition and recently lost a representation election. One older worker said he was originally against the union efforts, until he opened his eyes and saw what was really going on. He then became one of the most energetic in signing up people for the union election. Workers bought 13 copies of the *Militant*.

A worker at a restaurant who heard team members talking about our experience said he had gone to the 50,000-strong Martin Luther King Day march in Columbia, South Carolina, January 17 with his wife and child.

When he saw "a socialist newsweekly published in the interests of working people" inscribed on the paper's masthead he responded, "This is great!" and bought the paper.

He said the first article he wanted to read was on "Che Guevara Talks to Young People." He wished us luck in Charleston and hoped to see the paper again.

Four more papers were sold to workers



Selling the *Militant* to workers after they struck the Perdue chicken plant

at the giant new International Paper mill across the street from Georgetown Steel.

BY MARY MARTIN

LEWISTON, North Carolina—Supporters of the *Militant* newspaper found a warm response to the paper in a solidarity, sales and reporting trip here January 27-28. Workers at the Perdue poultry plant picked up 45 copies of a few different issues of the *Militant* during the two-day visit.

Many workers were interested in the *Militant's* coverage of the Martin Luther King Day protests that took place around the country including in Columbia, South Carolina, where 50,000 marched to protest the flying of the Confederate battle flag over the State Capitol building there. Several were interested in the prominent coverage in the paper given to the national drive of truckers to win representation by the Teamsters union at Overnite Transportation company.

In a trailer park where many Purdue employees live, eight workers told their story and bought copies of the *Militant*. At a visit to the plant gate at the night shift change, workers coming out bought 14 more papers. The following day during the factory's 30 minute lunch break, a couple dozen workers made quick stops into a restaurant next door to the plant and took a few minutes to talk with the *Militant* supporters. They got six more copies of the paper.

In addition, *Militant* supporters placed two copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder* in stores in nearby Ahoskie, North Carolina. One book was placed in a Native American Crafts store. The owner also bought the pamphlet *Genocide Against the Indians* for himself and said he would consider ordering it for his store. A second copy of *Capitalism's World Disorder* was placed in a bookstore that carries mainly religious titles. The manager was happy to add the book to her selection and indicated she would order more books for Black History Month.

Death toll grows from coal bosses' greed

BY JEREMY ROSE

EQUALITY, Illinois—With dozens of people standing in the aisles, about 300 people packed the St. Joseph Catholic Church here on January 29 for the funeral of Mark E. Wargel, 38, an underground coal miner. Wargel was killed three days earlier at the Pattiki Mine, just east of this Southern Illinois mining and farming town. Workers at the Pattiki Mine—operated by White County Coal Co., a subsidiary of Alliance Coal—are not organized.

In addition to family and friends, many of those attending the funeral were fellow

coal miners. Wargel was married and the father of two children.

The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources are investigating the exact cause of the accident. What is known so far is that Wargel was killed by a rock fall when portions of the rib and roof collapsed, dropping a huge boulder on him. Wargel, who was a roof bolter, operated a machine that drills holes in the roof of the mine and inserts steel rods and glue to laminate several strata of rock to support the top. The rib of a mine is the side of a coal pillar

left untouched to support the mine.

Federal mining regulations forbid anyone from entering an area where the roof has not been bolted or secured. Bolter operators work under a small canopy that protects them from small rock falls, but affords minimal protection from major rock falls or from roof or rib collapse.

Frequently, continuous-miner operators, who run the machine by remote control, will remove clearly unstable roof with the machine. But production demands by the bosses mean this usually only happens when a portion of the roof collapses on the mining machine itself.

Wargel is the first Illinois coal miner to die on the job in 2000. In 1998 no miners died in Illinois mines. Another miner, Earl Yates, was killed at the Pattiki mine in 1990. Last year one miner died at the Eagle Valley Mine near Equality when a rock fell on him while he was traveling out of the mine. Wargel was the second miner to die within a week's time as a result of the coal bosses' intensifying profit drive.

On January 21 Eddie Harris, 44, died in the No. 74 Leeco, Inc. mine near Hazard in eastern Kentucky. John Franklin of the Kentucky Department of Mines and Minerals told the Louisville *Courier Journal* that Harris apparently came into contact with the cutter head of the continuous-mining machine. Harris left a wife and one child. Nine coal miners were killed on the job in Kentucky in 1999.

In 1999 34 deaths were recorded in the coal mining industry in the United States. According to MSHA, 11 miners were killed during September and October. The federal agency called it a "dramatic increase in mining fatalities." Twenty-nine coal miners were killed in mine accidents in 1998.

Miner gives 'blood money' to Capital Fund

BY GREG McCARTAN

The first contribution toward the Pathfinder Capital Fund launched last week has come in. It is from a coal miner. "Enclosed is a check for the capital fund," the miner wrote in a note to fund director Dave Prince. "This should be credited to the coal miners' UMW fraction. It is blood money—a bonus based on tons shipped last month."

The Capital Fund makes it possible for Pathfinder's printshop to carry out equipment upgrades and capital improvements in the building that houses the publishing house as well as the offices of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* in New York.

Contributions are from supporters who can give funds received from inheritances, accident settlements, "blood money" bonuses, and other unexpected windfalls. The current drive aims to raise \$200,000 by the end of April to help purchase a new machine to stitch pamphlets and bulletins.

The accompanying article on the death of a coal miner illustrates why the produc-

tivity "bonuses" are "blood money" from the bosses. As they drive workers harder, ignore safety procedures, and push back union control over working conditions, a growing number of coal miners are being killed each year.

Miners and working people remember the Wilberg mine disaster in Utah where 27 people were killed on Dec. 19, 1984. The Emery Mining Company was trying to set a longwall production record at the mine, and crammed 27 workers into an area where normally only 12 would be working. A fatal fire occurred, resulting in the worst mine disaster in the United States since 1968.

Socialist workers in the United Auto Workers union are also discussing how to win contributions to the fund from workers at Ford and General Motors who are receiving profit-sharing bonuses.

For information on how you can help, or to send a contribution, contact the Capital Fund, 410 West St., New York, N.Y. 10014-2570.

Volunteers needed for Charleston team

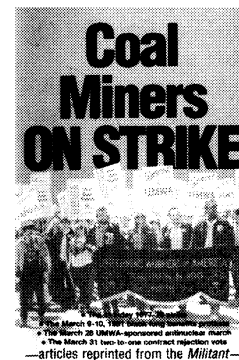
Over the next several weeks a team of *Militant* supporters will be based out of Charleston. Participants in the team will sell the *Militant* and Pathfinder books to working people in the region, and will gather facts on the struggles of working people there.

Naomi Craine, until recently the editor of the *Militant*, is organizing the team. Volunteers are welcome. If you are available, please call the *Militant* at (212) 243-6392.

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Clinton revels in 'prosperity,' pushes antimissile plan

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

"This is our moment," bragged U.S. president William Clinton in the closing sentences of his annual State of the Union speech on January 27. "The state of our union is the strongest it has ever been," he said.

The self-satisfied and arrogant tone that Clinton adopted in much of his address reflected the attitudes of the capitalist rulers he serves. They revel in the fruits of their decades-long assault on working people at home, and the economic and military edge they have opened over their rivals among the imperialist powers of Western Europe and Japan.

Clinton delivered his previous State of the Union speech in more precarious circumstances, in front of a Congress which was impeaching him after the Monica Lewinsky scandal. Clinton survived the impeachment, although he and the presidency emerged weakened.

Clinton spoke in defense of his record of military interventions abroad, and as the president who ended "welfare as we knew it."

He equated the long period of growth in the U.S. economy, which has lasted a record eight years and 11 months, with "prosperity." "We begin the new century with over 20 million new jobs. The fastest economic growth in more than 30 years, the lowest unemployment rates in 30 years." But even the commentators who claim that a downturn is unlikely note the signs of instability in the capitalist economy. "I can't see the

end of this expansion," exulted economist Allen Sinai. He then conceded "there is more 'noise' around the edges now." More sober capitalist observers acknowledge that "a recession must come," as Luis Uchitelle wrote in the January 30 *New York Times*.

Working people have enjoyed little of the touted prosperity. The percentage of people living below the official poverty line in 1998 has changed little since 1989. Real wages have barely risen in the last several years.

Clinton promised his capitalist masters that the government would maintain "fiscal discipline" and pay down the debt it owes to capitalist bondholders. He posed as a supporter of the wider provision of health and education services. "We must ensure that the benefits of debt reduction go to preserving two of the most important guarantees we make to every American—Social Security and Medicare," he stated. His proposals, though, pointed away from making medical care and schooling a right, free and available to all. Even his proposal to support "Vice President Al Gore's suggestion to make low income parents eligible for the insurance that covers their kids" would cover only one quarter of the "40 million Americans without health insurance."

"We ended welfare as we knew it," said Clinton. His administration's "welfare reform" cut off food stamps and Medicaid to many working people. Describing the "revival of the American spirit" in his speech, Clinton said that "welfare rolls [have been]

Biggest scandal in politics in Germany since World War II

BY CARL-ERIK ISACSSON

Helmut Kohl resigned his post as honorary chairman of the Christian Democratic Party in Germany January 18 after the party's national board demanded he break his silence about a financial scandal that for weeks had rocked the CDU.

Kohl was asked to clarify who the party's contributors are and how the money had been handled. Although he has admitted receiving about \$1 million paid into secret accounts, Kohl refused to name his financial backers.

For close to 50 years Kohl has been a leader of CDU and for 16 of them he was the head of a coalition government in Germany. Although self-proclaimed as the "father" of German reunification, his recent difficulties give a more accurate assessment of the problems facing the German ruling class.

Kohl was defeated by the Social Democratic Party in the 1998 elections as a large-scale crisis coming out of the rising class tensions in the country underpinned a leftward shift in capitalist politics in Germany.

A similar pattern emerged in other European countries and North America.

The scandal also involves Kohl's successor as leader of the CDU, Wolfgang Schäuble, who has been implicated for receiving large bribes from weapons dealer Karlheinz Schreiber. Schreiber says he has given money to politicians in Germany as bribes to approve a sale of armored vehicles from a German firm to Saudi Arabia and jet fighters to Canada. Other such arrangements have come to light.

Schäuble apologized in the Bundestag January 20 for having led astray both the German people and parliament and thus hurt confidence in the "democratic parties and institutions." The same day it had become public that Wolfgang Hüllen, the CDU politician who has had responsibility for the joint finances in the Bundestag of the CDU and its sister party, the Bavaria-based CSU (Christian Social Union), had committed suicide. He had left a letter stating personal reasons, but his suicide has been connected with the financial scandal.

The events have given some strength to right-wing parties, and rightist currents in the CDU. Republican party leader Rolf Schlierer said on January 21 that the scandal has led disappointed conservatives to look for other parties on the right. "It is unbelievable how fast interest in the Republicans is growing," he told the press.

In a January 29 article published by the *Financial Times*, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder argues that Germany's political system, and the public faith in it, have not been harmed by the CDU scandal. Although the scandal has increased the support for the Social Democratic Party, who had earlier been heavily defeated by CDU in state elections last year, the scandal still worries Schroeder.

The article was titled, "In democracy we trust," and Schroeder is clearly unhappy over the extent of the shakeup of bourgeois politics in Germany.

But the scandal has been occupying the German and, increasingly, the European public for weeks, growing to the biggest scandal in post World War II Germany.

By Carl-Erik Isacsson is a member of the metalworkers union in Södertälje, Sweden.

Hospital workers in France rally in defense of health-care system



Militant/Nat London

Some 10,000 hospital workers demonstrated January 28 in Paris against the budget cutbacks proposed by the government of Socialist Party premier Lionel Jospin. Similar actions took place throughout France and workers also organized a national strike the same day. In 1995 the government also attempted to partially dismantle the national health-care system, but a massive strike wave of railroad and other workers defeated the plan.

cut in half to their lowest levels in 30 years." In 1999 up to 50 percent of those denied payments had no jobs, and most of the rest were doing make-work jobs paying minimum wage with no benefits. relatively low levels of joblessness in the present upturn—four percent compared to over 11 percent in 1982—mask the impact of the welfare cuts. Those reductions in the social wage mean that wide layers of working people will be exposed to the impact of the serious downturn that sooner or later will come.

Acknowledging that droughts, floods, and historically low prices have made times very bad" for family farmers, Clinton offered no relief for this devastating crisis.

"Globalization...is the central reality of our time," said Clinton windily as he turned to trade and foreign policy questions. As he had done in Seattle during the conference of the World Trade Organization held in December of last year, he cynically used themes of respecting labor and human rights—opposing a "race to the bottom on the environment and worker protection"—as cover for imposing protectionist barriers against imports from third world countries and workers states.

Clinton defended the military interventions that Washington has organized during his 7 years in office. In the air war mounted by NATO against Yugoslavia in 1999, "we prevailed without losing a single American in combat," said Clinton. United States military forces bombarded Serbian and Kosovan targets from a safe distance, paving the way for an imperialist intervention force to be stationed in Kosova, and establishing Washington's clear military predominance over its French, German, and other European allies.

The U.S. rulers fear the response of infantry, sailors, and working people at home when ground troops suffer heavy casualties.

"Russia and China...are being held back from reaching their full potential," said Clinton, expressing frustration at the fact that despite a decade of announcements of market reforms, no capitalist class has stepped forward to seize and transform the Russian economy. He bemoaned Russia's "economic turmoil [and] a cruel and self-defeating war in Chechnya."

Clinton and other imperialist leaders have used Moscow's brutal invasion of Chechnya as a pretext to pressure and humiliate Moscow on the world stage.

Washington's stance toward Moscow has hardened as economic reforms have foundered. Clinton's proposal a year ago for a missile defense system designed to give the Pentagon a first-strike nuclear advantage, and other moves to tighten a military noose around the country, reflect this change. In his speech Clinton recycled the justification for this system by warning of military dangers from North Korea, Iran, and Iraq.

At the end of January, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited Russia to try to pressure Moscow to agree to changes to the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty, which at present bans the deployment of

such a system. Moscow remains opposed to such changes.

Before Congress, Clinton defended the "agreement we negotiated to bring China into the WTO," and called on the House to pass "Permanent Normal Trade Relations as soon as possible this year"—a decision required by the agreement. This proposal will be fiercely debated in Congress later this year. "Our markets are already open to China," said Clinton. "This agreement will open China's markets to us."

Big business in this country at present sees considerably greater opportunities in China for investment and trade than in Russia. But the capitalist rulers remain deeply hostile to the Chinese workers state, and divide only over tactical questions in applying their hostility.

On February 1 House of Representatives voted to expand military ties between Taiwan and the United States. The move could increase tensions and jeopardize the trade agreement, warned Clinton. "It would bring about very serious damage to China-U.S. relations," said a spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in Washington. Beijing has also stated strong objections to Washington's antimissile defense system. Later this year Clinton will decide whether to deploy the system.

Vice President Albert Gore shared the stage with Clinton during his speech. Gore is the front-runner for the Democratic Party presidential nomination this year, and his principal rival is Sen. William Bradley. Their contest grew more acrimonious in the past weeks as Bradley published Gore's voting record on abortion legislation to back up his claim to be the more consistent pro-choice candidate.

The differences between the two most prominent Republican candidates are rhetorically sharper. Trying to undermine the campaign of George W. Bush, who has the backing of leaders in the party, Sen. John McCain has turned more consciously to populist demagoguery. Playing on his record as a prisoner of war, McCain said on January 30 that he is "fully prepared to lead" as commander in chief. "I don't need on-the-job training," he said, in scornful reference to Bush.

Speaking in a Veterans of Foreign Wars hall McCain said, "We started our battle with the privates, the seamen, and the chief petty officers, they can have the generals and the admirals."

Republican candidates trade criticism of each other's proposals for tax cuts. McCain stung Bush with an unexpectedly comfortable victory in the New Hampshire primary in late January.

Overnite bosses aim blow at Teamsters with lawsuit

The Overnite Transportation Co. filed a \$5.2 million lawsuit against the Teamsters in federal court January 24. The Teamsters went on strike against the nonunion trucking firm last October to win a contract.

Seeking to deal a crippling blow to the strike, the employers' suit claims financial compensation for security expenses, property damage, and costs of replacing workers who they alleged "missed work due to the lawlessness." The bosses accuse the Teamsters of trying to "extort" a union contract using violence and illegal activities.

"This company has been famous for their legal machinations," said Dave Cameron, a national coordinator of the Teamsters. He called the lawsuit a "public relations stunt."

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Nonunion workers strike Perdue plant in North Carolina

Continued from front page
from the deboning department, one of the largest in the plant. Eighty to 90 percent walked out. Those who stayed in tended to be older workers."

A record snowfall of up to 17 inches, compounded by inadequate road plowing by local and state officials, made it impossible for many to get to work the week before. According to the cooler worker, one of the plant managers, Jeff Stalls, announced that workers would be issued disciplinary "occurrences" for absence and lateness regardless of the snow and ice. Workers with four or five "occurrences" would be fired and those who were absent the day before or the day after King Day would not be paid for the holiday.

To make matters worse, Stalls announced that workers would have to work 90 days straight to have an occurrence taken off, instead of the usual 28.

Workers reported that one person was fired for being late even though she was right outside the plant, pushing her car through the snow. The company also announced that those who had accidents on the way to work had to go into work as soon as they got out of the hospital.

"After the checks came in without the King Day pay, we just threw up our hands and walked out of the plant," said a worker in the deboning department. "I think the guys in the cooler started it, but it was hard to say who started it. I went because others went, but I think we did right."

Workers walk off the job

As the walkout began, several hundred workers gathered along the road outside the plant while others walked off their jobs but stayed inside, partly to avoid the bitter cold. The next day, a Saturday, work was scheduled. This time several hundred workers gathered outside the gates and decided not to go into the plant.

The cooler worker described the scene: "The minister of one of the local Black churches went in to talk to plant management. At about 1:00 p.m. the Perdue complex manager, Lester Gray, came out and talked to us through the fence. He said the company would drop the occurrences and everyone would get paid for King's holiday. Gray, who is white, went on to say that Martin Luther King was a great man and that he, Gray, sometimes wished he was a Black African-American. We did not appreciate him saying that.

"The next workday, Monday, again we gathered outside the gate. Some people went back to work but there were still hundreds outside and many inside the plant standing around and not working. We talked about the need for a \$1- or \$2- an-hour raise. Tuesday and Wednesday there was no work because of another snow storm. Thursday we decided to go back to work."

Another worker with 15 years experience said workers outside "wrote down what our demands were now, including a raise to \$9.00 an hour, in addition to the occurrences issues and the King Day pay. We chose a few people to bring them to the company." Workers on the production line currently top out at \$7.60 an hour.

Even though the workers went back after five days without a pay raise, everyone interviewed was encouraged by the victory on dropping the disciplinary "occurrences" and the payment to all workers for Martin Luther King's holiday. Many workers feel that they are not done fighting the company. There is a lot of discussion about new battles ahead.

"People are talking about walking out again, but the company has said they will start firing," said the worker from the deboning department. "On the company bulletin board today they posted that even though there are rumors, Perdue will never give a dollar raise. But I am confident we can fight for a pay raise. If they keep pushing us, we will have to."

Grissom reported that just before the workers decided to go back to work, the town commissioner had started to "talk like they were behind the company, saying they could fire us if they wanted to. I think that got some of the workers intimidated. And I

couldn't stay out alone."

Another worker remarked on the importance of the King holiday: "Of all the holidays for them to try to mess with, they chose that one!" Ninety percent of the plant workers are Black, and of those who are on the production line, almost all are women. There are a relatively small number of Latino and white workers, some of whom also joined the walkout.

Every worker interviewed at the plant gate, in their homes, and at a nearby restaurant, spoke about the brutal conditions inside the Perdue plant. Practically every worker in deboning has carpal tunnel syndrome, a debilitating injury to the nerves in the hands caused by repetitive motion.

The deboning worker said, "I got it after two months. When I went into the office of the company nurse they put me on 'light duty,' but it really wasn't so light. It was just someone else's job, then they switched me back after two months" as a way to cope with her injury.

Speed up cause of accidents

Workers debone birds at a rate of 32 per minute, and make six cuts on each. One worker recounted a time when a worker cut the person next to her accidentally.

A female worker described the difficulty of trying to see a doctor not paid by the company in this rural area. She had to travel nearly an hour, and then after accepting her insurance card, the clinic sent her a bill anyway.

Bonny Jones, 19 years old, said that he worked in deboning "long enough—nine hours—to know they didn't pay enough for the work. But I signed a union card while I was there. It's good they walked out. They should have a union, because it will help them to fight for better wages."

Dian said, "The company treats us bad but when the union comes they baby us and say they'll give us a raise. I think the union will be voted in this time. It should have happened before. I feel like if there's no change now, there never will be a change." He said he was very proud of taking part in the strike at the plant.

A 20-year-old worker added, "Things still aren't right. The company is now saying in April there will be a 20 cent raise. But we're not through yet."

Receive solidarity from other workers

Other workers in the area strongly supported the strike, including a number who had quit or had been fired from Perdue over the years. Several of these former workers are volunteers at the Center for Women's Economic Alternatives (CWEA), in the nearby town of Ahsokie. The CWEA helps workers file disability and unemployment claims. Volunteers from CWEA have leafleted the plant a number of times urging workers to take advantage of their rights under state and federal laws.

Two CWEA volunteers were Marilyn Gilliam and Mary Ann Grainger, fired by Perdue after developing carpal tunnel. They rushed to the plant as soon as they heard about the walkout to offer their solidarity.

John Jacobs, who works in the live haul division as a chicken catcher, said they make \$2.58 per thousand chickens they catch. One chicken catcher who has worked there five years reported that he felt they should walk out too. "I feel we are underpaid," he said. "The plant workers' check is based on the hour, but ours is based on how many chickens we catch. We don't get paid for waiting for the truck, or travel time. And we don't get any sick days."

"The small farmers we catch from are getting screwed over by Perdue too," he said. "I don't feel afraid trying to organize. In live haul, it's half older workers, and us younger workers have been trying to push them to fight back too."

Elena Tate is a student in New York City and a member of the Young Socialists. Stu Singer is a member of the United Transportation Union. Mary Martin, a member of the International Association of Machinists from Washington, D.C., also contributed to this article.

Justice for Amadou Diallo!



Protesters demand justice for Amadou Diallo, a 22-year-old West African immigrant killed by the cops in a hail of 41 bullets a year ago. The January 31 rally outside the county courthouse in Albany, New York, also protested moving of trial to the city where the cops are more likely to be acquitted. Four officers will be on trial scheduled to last a month. After the shooting, demonstrations against police brutality occurred daily outside the police headquarters in New York City.

Dockworkers defend union

Continued from front page
flict blown out of proportion. The cops provoked it."

A community support rally sponsored by a state senator drew 400 people January 31, prompting the local *Post and Courier* to worriedly write in its news headline: "Non-dockworkers may join fight." Held at the union's headquarters, speakers included state AFL-CIO officials, local clergy, the president of the local Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and several lawmakers. The rally raised \$3,600 towards the Dockworkers Defense Fund.

On February 1 the government again mobilized 600 state and city cops at the Columbus Street terminal to protect the Nordana Line, a shipping outfit that refused to allow union labor to unload its ships. The whole area around the terminal was occupied by cops on horseback and in patrol cars.

The Charleston police force took out an ad in the local paper offering a reward to

anyone who would "identify individuals from photographs and videos taken by the local news media and police personnel on the night of the riot."

ILA president Kenneth Riley said the ad was run on television as well as in the local papers.

"The guys are willing to take a stand to defend our union," Riley said. "Our goal is to preserve union jobs. Charlie Condon, the attorney general, is out to break the unions."

A convoy of 20 independent truckers, organized by the Teamsters union, drove through town to protest low wages.

Contributions to the Dockworkers' Defense Fund can be sent to 910 Morrison Drive, Charleston, S.C. 29403, Attn: Robert Ford.

Roslene Shields, a member of United Auto Workers Local 882, and Dick Geyer, a member of United Steelworkers of America Local 1201, contributed to this article.

Puerto Ricans protest plans to renew bombing practices in Vieques

Continued from front page

Under this mass pressure, colonial politicians such as Rosselló and leaders of the pro-Commonwealth Popular Democratic Party (PPD) have up to now joined the bandwagon, posing as part of a "consensus" against the U.S. Navy.

The deal accepted by Rosselló calls for a referendum by the residents of Vieques with only two voting options: either letting the Navy stay for three years or using Vieques indefinitely. The choice of the Navy leaving now—the central demand of the protests of the past 10 months—would not be on the ballot.

In a concession to these protests, the U.S. Navy would have restrictions on its use of the bombing range in eastern Vieques. Non-explosive cement-filled bombs would be used in place of explosive ordnance. The Navy would use the facility for 90 days per year and would have to enhance safety procedures and noise abatement.

'We are not for sale'

To buy support for the plan, it includes an offer of \$40 million to be spent on projects in Vieques such as ferry docks, road building, and help to fishermen. The price for permanent use of the facility with live ammunition would cost an additional \$50 million, according to the U.S. plan. That money, however, would only materialize if it was approved by the U.S. Congress.

"We are not for sale," said Guadalupe in

response to the monetary offer.

The Vieques leader called the proposed vote "a military referendum—proposed by the U.S. Navy, with the options chosen by the U.S. Navy, all of which would authorize bombing by the U.S. Navy. We oppose all bombing, whether it's with live or inert bombs."

He added that the proposed three-year period of bombing would allow the U.S. government to seek a way to renege on the deal.

As part of the agreement with Clinton, Rosselló pledged that the Puerto Rican police will help remove camps of people protesting the U.S. Navy that have been set up in the firing ranges.

Meanwhile, Anibal Acevedo, vice president of the PPD, which favors the current colonial status of Puerto Rico, backtracked on the party's previous support to the civil-disobedience camps on Vieques. Now that Gov. Rosselló struck a deal with Washington, it's impossible to achieve the protesters' goal, he asserted.

Guadalupe, however, stated, "The protest camps will continue. In fact, right now they are filling up with more people who are joining us."

Leaders of the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), who organize one of the main camps, also vowed to remain in defiance of the U.S. and colonial governments.

Organizing to join with vanguard militants and build a proletarian party

From Miami to Fresno, the Carolinas to coal fields, New York to San Francisco

BY GREG McCARTAN
AND STEVE CLARK

NEWYORK—The Socialist Workers Party took another step in late January to respond to the continuing resistance of a vanguard of workers and farmers, structure its own institutions through participation in the strikes and struggles that are increasingly a feature of politics in areas of the United States, and link up with militants attracted to communism.

Coming out of a January 22-23 National Committee leadership meeting here, several new SWP organizing committees are being established, including one in the Carolinas and another in Fresno, California. Socialist workers and Young Socialists are packing up and moving to reinforce the work of party units in coalfield communities in the Western and Eastern United States and centers of the meatpacking industry in the Midwest. Others are coming to New York City to work in Pathfinder's printshop, where books and pamphlets containing the legacy of the revolutionary workers movement are produced, as well as the *Militant* newsweekly and Spanish-language monthly *Perspectiva Mundial*.

Party members in New York, Newark, San Francisco, and Oakland are also discussing how to increase the number of branch units in each metropolitan area, organized to better orient their work to industries where socialists work, are active in trade unions, and from which they reach out to campuses and the countryside.

In the second half of the 1970s the party made a turn to get the big majority of its members into industrial union jobs. The aim of the projected moves in the New York area and Northern California, like those elsewhere in the country, is to advance what is called the party's "third campaign for the turn" since that time.

This campaign was launched by the party in mid-1998 in response to an upturn in resistance by working people in a number of urban and rural areas across the United States. Leading fighters of what can become, with larger struggles, a new proletarian movement have begun emerging in the coalfields, as well as among working people in city and countryside, most notably at first in sections of the U.S. Southeast.

Measurable progress has been made in renewing the activity of communist workers in the garment, meatpacking, and coal industries and related unions, as well as among working farmers and the rural poor. After a nearly decade-long retreat by labor, a road is being opened to strengthen the SWP's functioning as a proletarian party, lay the foundations of an increasingly competent Young Socialists movement, and demonstrate to supporters of the communist movement the immediate results of their work.



Strikers walk picket line against Valley Manufactured Housing in Sunnyside, Washington. Some 160 workers, mostly Mexicans, walked off the job last August demanding a wage increase, no forced overtime, and lower medical costs.

Meetings in Pittsburgh and Atlanta of socialist workers in the Union of Needletrades, Industrial, and Textile Employees (UNITE), the United Food and Commercial Workers union (UFCW), and the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) were held in early January, along with a meeting of socialists participating in the struggles of farmers.

National fraction meetings of those in the United Steelworkers of America (USWA), United Transportation Union (UTU), United Auto Workers (UAW), and International Association of Machinists (IAM) will take place February 5-6 in Los Angeles and Birmingham. Socialist workers will discuss how they can learn from the work of each of their members in those unions, as they find ways to advance the party's efforts to increase its presence among union and nonunion garment workers, packinghouse workers, and coal miners.

The Los Angeles and Birmingham meetings will discuss how to give a second wind in the opening months of this year to the campaign to sell *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*, a book that presents the political views of the Socialist Workers Party as its members dealt with the complex and fast-moving changes in the international class struggle from the beginning of the 1990s to today. Since the publication of this book in March 1999, SWP members and Young Socialists have been organizing

to get it into the hands of workers, farmers, and youth, including onto the shelves of retail stores and libraries where they go to find books. The recent release of the Spanish translation of the book creates new opportunities for this effort, as will advance orders for the French translation, to be published at the beginning of March.

The meetings will also launch an educational campaign—organized for youth and new acquaintances and political contacts of the communist movement—to read and study the book *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions*. That book offers the best available political explanation of the SWP's turn to industry and its strategic course to fight for the transformation of the unions into revolutionary instruments of struggle.

'How deep the problem is'

SWP national secretary Jack Barnes opened the political report to the National Committee meeting by pointing to a letter he had read from a party leader in the Midwest. This worker, who is in the machinists union, wrote about a recent conversation with a Midwest farmer who is fighting to defend his land and is involved in the struggle against racist practices by the United States Department of Agriculture. The farmer was well along toward finishing *Capitalism's World Disorder*.

The letter reported that after reading the book, this farmer said he realized "he didn't understand before how deep the problem is. He is thinking about how he will tell other farmers the depth of the problem they face." He was thinking about how to explain it to others he works and fights alongside. And he was thinking about the implications—for action and organization—of the deep social crisis being prepared by the very "success" of U.S. capitalism.

Even fighters who've been through many struggles can nonetheless become frustrated over time, since it's impossible from any single experience, and as a lone individual, to come to a scientific understanding of the dynamics of the conflicting forces in class society.

"As each one of us remembers," Barnes said, "it is a great release to recognize there is a deeper problem than those directly bearing down on us and other working people. It's a great load off our shoulders to know it's possible for those we've been fighting together with to understand it and reach beyond a partial view to broader political conclusions—and thus lay the objective foundations for common proletarian organizational conclusions."

"When we meet other workers and farmers, it's liberating to know that they also face the same root problems, regardless of the variety of concrete forms." It's not just a matter

of understanding, but a practical question of how to change those conditions.

"Whether we're farmers, or wage workers, or young people repelled by the brutalities of capitalism, we can come to the understanding that there is no way out of the crises produced by capitalism without turning toward the proletariat and its historic line of march, toward the alliance of the toiling classes that can make possible a massive social revolution in the United States and worldwide," the SWP leader said.

What a working farmer explained after reading *Capitalism's World Disorder* helps us see that the march of nearly 50,000 people in Columbia, South Carolina, on January 17 demanding removal of the slavocracy's battle flag—what became almost a century after the Civil War the racists' and rightists' banner of hatred against desegregation—from atop the statehouse, and the struggle of dockworkers in Charleston that erupted several days later, are not isolated events. They are aspects of a rise in resistance in recent years by UMWA miners and UAW-organized Caterpillar workers in the Midwest, agricultural workers in the lettuce and strawberry fields of California, and others.

Among working farmers, too, there are growing actions. On February 1, dairy farmers in five states—from Wisconsin to New York—organized rallies to protest collapsing prices from the distributors to whom they sell their milk. And a March 21 Rally for Rural America has been called for Washington, D.C., and is being widely publicized and built by working farmers.

These fights are a response by working people—sometimes completely unexpected in their size, or the sharpness of the conflict—to manifestations of oppression, brutality, and assaults on social justice by the propertied classes that have built up over time and become more and more intolerable.

A slowly growing number of individual working people come to recognize that no particular form of that oppression is itself the root of the problem. It is the capitalist system—born as the most productive, dynamic, and first global social system in human history, based on the exploitation of free labor, of wage slaves, and intensifying the cruel super-exploitation of forms of bonded labor—that perpetuates the myriad forms of social oppression it inherits from previous periods of class society.

Those forms of oppression—that seek to pit men against women, to pit workers with white skin against the descendants of chattel slaves—are produced and reproduced by the lawful workings of capital.

Fascism, often portrayed by apologists for capitalism as an aberration, is in fact the inevitable product of a form of social relations whose ruling propertied families, in times of deepening crisis, resort to the organization of storm troopers to defend their power in face of revolutionary challenges by workers and farmers. From Austria, to Columbia, South Carolina, to Patrick Buchanan's web site, the seeds, slogans, and symbols of such reactionary movements can be seen.

A weakening system

U.S. imperialism, despite its enormous wealth, paper billionaires, and military might, Barnes said, "is a weakening system, not a strengthening system" today.

That's why a number of prominent bourgeois figures—from conservative Republican federal judge Richard Posner, to Democratic Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan—reacted so strongly to the impeachment proceedings against President Clinton last year. They are concerned about the growth of factionalism and its destabilizing, "disuniting," consequences for their class.

"Do not doubt that [impeachment] could bring radical instability to American government," Moynihan warned on the Senate floor. And Posner, in a recent book on the impeachment, "concludes that the country is much more fragile than we might hope," emphasizes a *New York Times* reviewer.

This is different from the Watergate crisis

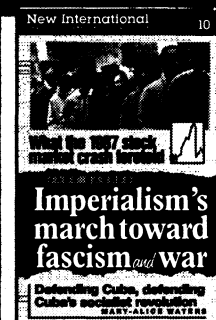
From Pathfinder

Imperialism's March toward Fascism and War

Jack Barnes

"There will be new Hitlers, new Mussolinis. That is inevitable. What is not inevitable is that they will triumph. The working-class vanguard will organize our class to fight back against the devastating toll we are made to pay for the capitalist crisis. The future of humanity will be decided in the contest between these contending class forces."

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of the early 1970s, Barnes explained, when President Richard Nixon was forced to resign from office. There, the impeachment proceedings became part of the ruling-class effort to clean up the disarray coming out of Washington's defeat in Vietnam. They reestablished the credibility of the imperial presidency for a time, and launched the initial assaults on the working class with the first tremors of the world capitalist crisis in 1974-75.

In assessing our class enemy, Barnes said, it is important for the workers movement to note a historic break from the relatively stable patterns and civil tone of bourgeois politics since the consolidation of U.S. imperialism as the dominant world capitalist power coming out of World War II.

A bipartisan foreign policy was hammered out during the postwar Democratic administration of Harry Truman, and consensus was established within U.S. ruling circles that the tone and outward civility of relations between and within the two bourgeois parties should be kept within bounds.

Foreign policy initiative was the prerogative

of an international body so sharply divergent from official administration policy—and so insulting to every other government represented there—“would have been unthinkable during the Truman or subsequent administrations,” Barnes said.

Confederate battle flag

The recent debate over whether the battle flag of the Confederate army should fly over the South Carolina statehouse was intended to be kept within ruling circles. But other class forces got involved, reflecting the sharpening political polarization in the United States and growing resistance of working people in that region.

Some 6,000 rightists had marched in a racist rally in Columbia on January 8, and that same week two leading Republican presidential candidates made statements about the “stars and bars” that bent sharply to its reactionary defenders. All this was resoundingly answered on January 17 by an outpouring of nearly 50,000 marchers, drowning in numbers alone the rightist rally, demanding that the flag be taken down and that the state recognize Martin Luther King's birthday as a holiday.

The dispute is not over conflicting assessments of the Civil War, Barnes said. The Confederate battle flag was raised in the 1950s and early 1960s as a banner of reaction by defenders of Jim Crow segregation and disenfranchisement. It was the standard of the racist foes of the mass proletarian movement for Black civil rights that first swept the South and then spread across the United States.

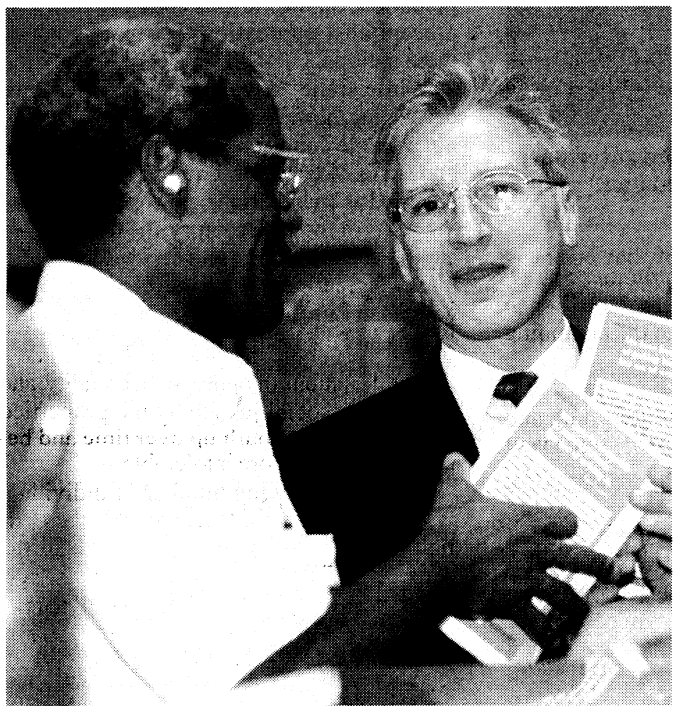
At the Columbia march a number of demonstrators carried homemade signs portraying the battle flag with an equal sign next to a noose, a whip, and a burning cross—symbolic of the mass lynch terror used to impose and consolidate Jim Crow over the decades following defeat of post-Civil War Radical Reconstruction in 1877.

The action in Columbia “signals a new level of class combat rising in the South and elsewhere in this country,” Barnes stated. Working-class forces “scored even a tactical victory with the size of the march alone. It announced a beginning of the effort to smash a counterrevolution against the historic conquests of the civil rights movement, and the unionization gains and expansion of social security that accompanied it.”

‘Fear of freedom’

By and large, such tactical victories for working people are still infrequent. What's new is that out of such fights today—including those that conclude in stalemates and defeats—there are numbers of vanguard workers who emerge not beaten down or embittered, but who keep reaching out for other working people in struggle; who want to get to know each other and each other's fights; and who are open to broader political perspectives, especially those that have the courage and clarity of the radical analysis presented by communist workers and youth. Militants are hungry for books such as *Capitalism's World Disorder*; they want to consider these ideas, and discuss them with others they meet in struggle.

These kinds of fights are spreading, Barnes said. Communist workers need to become more timely in joining in these struggles and catching up to their broader implications. Socialists can present a working-class explanation of social conflicts that helps fighters unravel the political rationalizations for exploitation and oppression by rightist and other bour-



John Hawkins (left) and Peter Theirjung give final inspection to newly printed Pathfinder book, *Making History: Interview with Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces*.

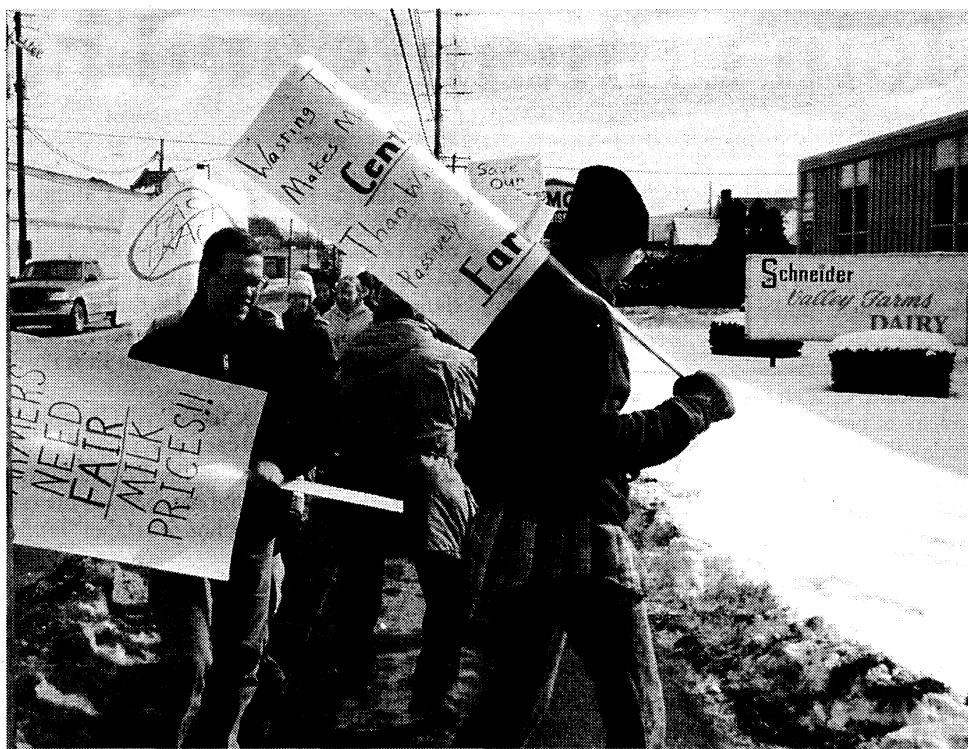
geoisie of the White House, with the president speaking for the interests of the wealthy U.S. rulers; disputes were largely kept behind closed doors. Both the Democratic and Republican party majorities differentiated themselves before the electorate largely over domestic policy.

This was a sign of the relative strength of U.S. imperialism for several decades. Now, each move made by one wing of the capitalist rulers against another, as they seek to do what they think is needed to advance their class interests, weakens them as a ruling class.

Well before the Clinton impeachment crisis, the SWP leader pointed out, the communist movement began calling attention to the increasing coarseness and “pornographication” of bourgeois politics in the rhetoric of the incipient fascist demagogue Patrick Buchanan and bonapartist figures such as Ross Perot, as well as within the two major parties themselves. That tendency has accelerated and spread.

The wealthy families who run the United States, and the Democratic and Republican politicians who represent them, more openly and harshly conflict with each other over foreign policy today. As a recent example, Barnes pointed to statements by a range of capitalist politicians, Republicans and Democrats alike, taking their distance from, and often stridently condemning, the announcement by the Clinton administration of its intention to return Elián González to his father in Cuba.

The SWP leader also noted the denunciatory speech by Sen. Jesse Helms before the United Nations Security Council. Organizing a senior U.S. senator to give a speech before



Kathie Fitzgerald

Dairy farmers demand higher prices for their milk from dairy company at February 1 protest in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. The demonstration was part of actions organized by farmers at 10 facilities in New York, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

geois politicians. They need to maximize their striking power. And they can recruit to the communist movement, especially to its youth organization.

Given these openings, the main current practical obstacle before socialist workers is “the fear of freedom,” Barnes said. “It is now more possible than anytime for almost two decades to organize the party—where we have units, on our jobs, how every one of the party's institutions functions—through mass work. But if we cling to the methods of functioning that have willy-nilly become habitual, almost casual, over nearly a decade of retreat by our class, we'll fail.”

In the speeches collected in Pathfinder Press's just released *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*, the Argentine-born revolutionary explains how a leadership capable of organizing workers and peasants to make a revolution was built in Cuba in the 1950s. The Rebel Army had to gauge their moves and use their time effectively. They learned from the peasants, won their political confidence, and in turn convinced vanguard fighters they could defeat the U.S.-backed tyranny of Fulgencio Batista—defeat its army—guns in hand.

The leadership of the Rebel Army cadres knew what the forces of the military dictatorship were up to, and what their own forces could accomplish at a given place and time with their limited stock of arms and ammunition.

Through disciplined work and careful planning, they grew in their capacity to carry out attacks and advance their political goals without unnecessarily wasting the energies and lives of their cadre.

“In the end,” Barnes said, “this made the difference between there being a mighty socialist revolution in Cuba, or just a rumor some guys had been fighting up in the hills in the '50s but had probably been wiped out.”

The possibility to fight more effectively is now opening for communist workers in the United States as well, and the party must get the most out of every move it makes.

Communists can win a wider hearing for our explanation that the biggest lie of all by the bosses is when they speak of “we”—“we” in this company, “we” Americans, versus “they” in a competing company, or in another country. But the only “we” are the exploited and oppressed here and around the world—working people, small farmers, youth. “They” are the superrich minority who profit from and defend the capitalist system.

The assault on science

In times of mounting social crisis, Barnes said, the rulers seek to blunt rising class consciousness, among other ways, by promoting religious and other antiscientific notions that fetishize existing class relations and obfuscate an understanding of the development of human society and the modern class struggle.

The teleological attack on Darwinian evolution is moving from the fringes on the right wing into the pages of established bourgeois magazines from within the ranks of its “supporters.” Popular physics promotes notions that everything in the universe since the Big Bang has had a purpose: the emergence of human life.

Whatever form the mystification takes, the goal is the same: to drum into working people and youth that things *act on us*, rather than being the makers of our own destiny; that we are the objects, not the subjects of history. Since everything ends up with us, with human beings, we are told, there must be a plan; there must be a creator to whose goals we should submit.

The later it becomes in the evolution of capitalist society and the rise of fighting pro-

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On January 1, 1959, men and women of Cuba in their millions ceased being simply the objects of history. They became its makers as well. By their actions they opened the door to the first socialist revolution in the Americas.

The human beings who fought to accomplish that feat were ordinary working people. Most were still in their teens or early twenties when they began. Who they were, where they came from, and the experiences that transformed them are the subject of these interviews with Néstor López Cuba, Enrique Carreras, José Ramón Fernández, and Harry Villegas. Edited and with an introduction by Mary-Alice Waters.

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Join militants and build proletarian party

Continued from previous page

letarian movements, the more damaging are the political consequences of such religious and obscurantist ideas. The more they keep reemerging to underpin not only rightist and fascist movements, but imperialist conservatism itself.

But the Church and church institutions as pillars of bourgeois society are much weaker today than it has ever been. Barnes called attention to the recent difficulties of the Catholic Church hierarchy in recruiting young women to be nuns. The median age of nuns in the United States, one order reports, is now 68.

Communist workers hold ourselves to the same standard as we do fellow working people: how we conduct ourselves in the class struggle. We don't campaign around or lecture fighters about religious views they may hold. But we recognize that anything that obscures an objective understanding of the laws of class society is the bitter enemy of the proletariat's ability to organize itself on a mass scale, forge a communist party, and make a revolution.

Barnes concluded that Farrell Dobbs, for two decades the national secretary of the SWP, presented the real alternative to reliance on faith in the dedication to *Teamster Rebellion*, the first book in Dobbs's four-volume series on the strikes and organizing drives that helped pave the way for the industrial union movement in the Upper Midwest in the 1930s; as a battle-tested cadre of General Drivers Local 574 in Minneapolis, Dobbs became a central leader of those campaigns.

As working people go through battles together as part of a fighting social movement such as that, their attitudes toward each other, and what they are capable of, are profoundly transformed. Barnes quoted Dobbs's dedication: "To the men and women who gave me unshakable confidence in the working class, the rank and file of General Drivers Local 574."

North American command

The U.S. rulers are accelerating their moves to use their military might, and strategic nuclear power, to defend their class interests around the world.

Just in the past month, Barnes noted, the U.S. government put into place a North American command of the U.S. armed forces, a proposal floated by the Clinton administration

more than a year ago. To deflect attention from the fact that for the first time a command structure is openly being established to conduct military operations against residents of the United States, the Pentagon adopted what the *New York Times* called "a less evocative phrase"—the Joint Task Force Civil Support.

But this new "task force" will be able to call on nearly all military units based in the United States, as well as the FBI and other police agencies, to combat whatever the rulers, at any given time, choose to label "terrorism" on U.S. soil.

Rationalizing its course on grounds of

But it has been a weak expansion, with a low rate of growth, particularly in the 1990s.

A striking feature of the U.S. capitalist economy, Barnes said, is the fact that a substantial percentage of the profits of major U.S. corporations—sometimes "to an alarming extent," in the words of a recent article in the *Financial Times* of London—comes not from sales of goods and services, but from increased paper values of stock held by their financial departments. Two-thirds of Microsoft's latest 30 percent increase in earnings, for example, was accounted for by its stock holdings in other companies. And when Microsoft (or other major U.S. corporations) buys up an-



Thousands of indigenous people march on Ecuador's capital, Quito, to protest government policies. Mobilizations brought down regime of former president Jamil Mahuad.

"terrorist threats" by so-called "rogue" nations and groups, the Clinton administration is simultaneously pushing forward to test and lay the groundwork to deploy an antiballistic missile shield that will strengthen Washington's nuclear first-strike capacity. Here, the Democratic White House has made progress where the Ronald Reagan and George Bush administrations were temporarily stymied.

Barnes also pointed to recent Central Intelligence Agency claims that the government of Iran is now capable of developing a nuclear bomb.

"This 'revelation' will also be used to justify closer scrutiny of Iranians and others from the Middle East living in the United States," Barnes said. Just as Washington, whipping up a scare campaign around spying by the government of China, has framed up a physicist of Taiwanese birth living and working in the Southwest.

"Each of these steps aims to restrict political space for working people in order to justify curtailment of democratic rights," Barnes said. The rulers also aim to slow down the tendency of politicizing workers to see themselves more and more as citizens of the world—to reach out to working people in other countries, to travel and get to know them, to invite them to come here and meet with fellow militants.

Barnes cited growing efforts to get people in this country to accept longer waits and more intrusions in order just to get on an airplane. "They try to wear you down to accept dogs and cops being brought on the plane, or being herded down the jetway back to the concourse, to investigate 'terrorist threats'." And they try to get airport workers to accept dogs and cops on the ramps and by the cargo bins."

Washington is preparing to hold more and more of the world hostage militarily—through operations such as its unrelenting air assaults against Iraq, and its wars and military occupations in Bosnia and Kosova. But the U.S. rulers are operating under a great illusion—the great hope, in reality—that they can wage the wars necessary to defend their class interests without beginning to face the reality of body bags coming home.

Meanwhile, nationalist right-wingers such as Patrick Buchanan press a different course to reassert U.S. imperialism's world military power. The way will be cleared for more effective military action abroad, Buchanan says, when "America" is strong at home—that is, when more devastating blows have first been dealt to labor and its toiling allies.

Discounting a very brief, eight-month recession in 1990-91, U.S. capitalism has been in a period of expansion for some 18 years.

other company, the stock of that business usually shoots up, increasing the paper profits of Microsoft.

The speculative tendency dramatized by the 1994-95 default on municipal bonds by Orange County in California—pouring revenues into a ballooning bubble of debt and other paper values—is becoming a fact of internal dynamics for more and more large U.S. corporations.

Investors Business Daily recently sounded an alarm on the takeover of Time Warner by America Online. AOL was valued at \$156 billion on the stock market, the financial daily pointed out, but its real assets were only a small fraction of that. AOL put up its own stock as payment for the deal announced January 10, but its share prices then dropped by nearly 20 percent over the next three weeks.

All these tendencies can be held off for a time, but not without a new period of rapid growth—something denied imperialism without massive new assaults on working people. In fact, what puts its stamp on U.S. capitalism today—and a terrible squeeze on wage workers and independent commodity producers such as farmers and fishermen—is the low rate of growth of production, the low rate of expansion of industrial capacity.

The U.S. economy right now is marked not by deflation, Barnes said, but by a low-grade inflation, a slow rise in the general price level. This can change sharply, however, when the giant asset bubble bursts, resulting in a banking crisis, plunging industrial production, and a deflationary collapse of employment.

Small farmers and other independent commodity producers face ruin because they can't recover their costs, since they operate under monopoly pricing conditions at both ends of the production process. They are gouged for seed, fertilizer, fuel, grain, and other inputs, and then must sell the products of their labor at below production costs to giant capitalist distributors.

Trading terms only shift to their favor in a period of a strong, long-term cyclical upturn in the world capitalist economy—conditions that have eluded small farmers for the better part of a decade.

The social relations perpetuated by capitalism continually push working farmers toward the proletarian condition—owning free and clear neither the land they work nor the equipment they use, existing as debt slaves at the sufferance of the banks and lending institutions. With only a slow expansion, the edge farmers may get one year is taken away through devastating price swings—as well as the longer-term encroachment of forms of monopoly-dominated "contract farming"

in the countryside—the next.

The SWP National Committee also discussed the rebellion by workers, peasants, and indigenous people in Ecuador that had peaked in the wee hours of the morning before the NC meeting opened.

In Quito, the capital city, and in Guayaquil, the largest port and industrial center, labor organizations, peasant groups, neighborhood organizations, soldiers, and students came together and declared a popular government—a "Parliament of the People." Their actions demonstrated the tendency toward "soviets"—popular councils—inherent in any deep mass uprising.

'Emerging' markets?

Barnes said that the social explosion in Ecuador, where production had been contracting for several years, should be a reminder that it's inaccurate to say there's no economic development in the so-called developing nations of the semicolonial world. The degree of development is sharply different from one Third World country to the next, and among continents and regions as well. But in some of these countries—Iran, India, Brazil, Mexico, South Korea, and elsewhere—there is extensive industrial and commercial development.

Moreover, this capitalist development brings with it all the social inequities, brutalities, and dislocations that are inherent to that dog-eat-dog system—and superimposes them, as a necessary means of its own perpetuation, on the various concrete forms of precapitalist oppression that mark each of these nations.

While some "developing countries" are developing, however, no "emerging market"—not a single country anywhere in semicolonial Asia, Africa, or Latin America—has emerged as an imperialist power. By the closing years of the 19th century, the workings of capitalist exploitation had divided the world into two great camps: a handful of oppressor nations in Europe, North America, and parts of Asia and the Pacific, and the oppressed nations encompassing the great majority of humanity and land mass of the earth. That division remains intact and unchanged to this day.

"The absence of a single exception is a stunning confirmation," Barnes said, "of the assessment made by Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin some 85 years ago in his pamphlet, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*."

But if there were no capitalist development in the semicolonial world, then the proletarian forces and other toilers we see coming together in struggle in countries such as Ecuador would be far weaker—and revolutionary prospects would be few and much less likely of success. In fact, however, a modern working class and tendencies to cooperation among toilers "develops" simultaneously.

As it did a century or more earlier in other parts of the world, capitalism is producing its own gravediggers in these countries—a growing urban proletariat, with its allied wage and debt slaves (and often substantial remnants of bonded labor) on the land.

Rights and gains under fire

Barnes pointed to the lines along which the federal and state governments continue to push against the hard-won democratic rights and social gains of working people.

Growing numbers are incarcerated each year—1.8 million in local, state, and federal jails and prisons in 1999, up from around a quarter million only 20 years earlier. More and more states are putting children and teenagers on trial as adults, and many more Black and Latino youth than those who are white—twice as many in some states—face this situation. Prison authorities are making widespread use of lockdowns in a heinous attempt to break the spirit, to warp the souls, of thousands. Inmates are being hired out more as cheap labor to corporations.

In face of such measures, Barnes said it's good to be reminded of the rebellion by inmates at New York's Attica state prison in 1971. He was referring to recent media coverage of a proposed settlement with inmates beaten and wounded in the government assault, during which more than 30 prisoners were killed.

"We can again see the working people who are the subjects of revolution, not just objects of brutality," Barnes said. "We can see the scope of the fighting alliance of workers and farmers that will be forged in revolutionary struggle to uproot this final, brutal class sys-

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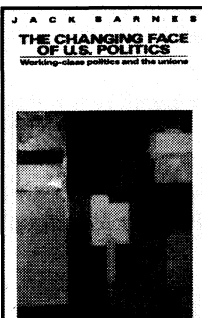
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FROM PATHFINDER

THE CHANGING FACE OF U.S. POLITICS

Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions
Jack Barnes

A handbook for workers coming into the factories, mines, and mills, as they react to the uncertain life, turmoil, and brutality of capitalism in the closing years of the twentieth century. It shows how millions of workers, as political resistance grows, will revolutionize themselves, their unions, and all of society. Also available in Spanish and French. \$19.95



THE STRUGGLE FOR A PROLETARIAN PARTY

James P. Cannon

In this companion Trotsky's *In Defense of Marxism*, Cannon and other leaders of the Socialist Workers Party defend the centrality of proletarianization within the political and organizational principles of Marxism in a polemic against a petty-bourgeois current in the party. The debate unfolded as Washington prepared to drag U.S. working people into the slaughter of World War II. \$19.95

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12.

Ottawa deepens attacks on democratic rights

BY PETER DUCK AND
NED DMYTRYSHYN

VANCOUVER, B.C.—“Brace yourself for life in the 21st century border town. Experts, pushing to protect us from terrorists and smugglers of contraband, human and otherwise, tally the cost: long border line-ups, heavy airport security and electronic walls all around,” read a front-page article in the January 8 *Vancouver Sun*.

Entitled, “Fortress Vancouver,” the article is a warning of the government’s intention to deepen its attack on democratic rights.

“Such aggressive measures are necessary, national security analysts and senior policy advisors across the continent say, to combat the recent confluence of threats from transnational people smugglers and, as the discovery of the Algerian bomb plot reiterates, foreign extremists operating within Canada,” the article asserts.

Leading up to New Year’s eve Vancouver cop spokesperson Anne Drennan said people should expect a considerable increase in police presence in the city. She said if people could not explain where they were going they wouldn’t be allowed into downtown.

These events followed a scare campaign whipped up around the arrest of an Algerian, Ahmed Ressay, as he was driving his car into Washington State from Canada. The authorities claim Ressay possessed materials that could have been used to construct a bomb. This incident in particular is being used by Ottawa to gain wider acceptance of its secret police, The Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS). In the midst of a media barrage and hype about Y2K threats, CSIS director Ward Elcock has said that 50 “terrorist” organizations have a presence in

Canada and that 350 individuals are being tracked.

This atmosphere has led to a stepped-up campaign against immigrants, with claims that a more selective and restrictive approach toward Canadian immigration policy be adopted. The Reform Party, a right-wing capitalist party and the official opposition in Canadian parliament has made this a central campaign.

The recent discovery of 25 Chinese migrants inside two cargo containers at the port of Vancouver has intensified this campaign. These are the latest of over 600 Chinese migrants that have come to Canada by boat since last summer. All but 85 are still imprisoned while their requests for refugee status are being processed. Only two have been accepted so far.

Efforts to further criminalize immigration, justify attacks on immigrant rights, and to get working people to accept cop intrusion into their lives have been accompanied by moves to increase policing of the Canadian-U.S. borders.

“Canada’s been a staging point for terrorists for a long time,” said Yossef Bodansky, a U.S. Congressional task force director. “There were key people in Canada who were part of the networks related to the World Trade Center bombers,” he claimed. “There is a vast infrastructure, networks, probably several thousand strong, resilient, well entrenched [across the continent]. They can try again and again. They have enough people and resources to do it.” Bodansky advanced his anti-Muslim views in the *Vancouver Sun* saying, “Muslim organizations....could have been the instrument to point fingers or restrain the radical minority from doing naughty naughty

things. They don’t do it.”

Peter Duck is a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers union at Fletchers

Fine Foods in Vancouver. Ned Dmytryshyn is a member of the Machinists Union at Avcorp Industries in Delta, British Columbia.

Join with militants and build party

Continued from previous page
tem from the face of the earth.

Ever-expanding government-organized gambling is pervasive, Barnes pointed out. It not only constitutes the most regressive form of taxation on working people, but signals the broad rot of bourgeois norms and the desperation of layers of the population.

The rulers are slowly but surely chopping away at democratic rights through a series of Supreme Court rulings based on the protection of “states’ rights.” A recent example is the court’s decision to review whether or not individual states are bound by federal protections of the rights of handicapped people.

Far from being a sign of strength of the U.S. ruling class and their government institutions, such assaults add to their fragility.

During the 1996 debate on the Clinton administration bill to “end welfare as we know it”—adopted that year with broad bipartisan support—Democratic Senator Moynihan cautioned that the law “is not ‘welfare reform,’ it is ‘welfare repeal.’ It is the first step in dismantling the social contract that has been in place in the United States since at least the 1930s....

“This legislation breaks the social contract of the 1930s. We would care for the elderly, the unemployed, the dependent children. Drop the latter,” he warned, “watch the others fall.”

Referring to the legislative provision cutting off welfare recipients altogether after five years, Moynihan said millions now faced falling off a “five-year cliff.”

Even during what the U.S. rulers celebrate as the longest economic expansion in history, Barnes said, the official poverty rate never once dropped below 12 percent after 1982, as it had in previous upturns. Until the last few years of the 1990s, real wages were still lower for the average worker in the United States than they had been in 1973, and the income of the bottom 20 percent of wage earners fell by 6 percent over the past 20 years. Most workers are on the job for longer hours, and face speedup and much more dangerous conditions.

So, what will happen in the event of a sharp downturn in the capitalist business cycle? What will be the social and political consequences for the stability of the capitalist system? Those are the questions—there’s not even a twinge of human solidarity—that sometimes cause the Moynihans to break out in a cold sweat.

The lines of resistance among working

people that communist workers are following today are a product of the workings of capitalism itself. This resistance is not yet generalized among proletarian layers in either city or countryside across the United States, but fights continue to spread.

The large mobilization in Columbia, South Carolina, and then the dockworkers struggle in Charleston a few days later, seemed to many class-conscious workers in other parts of the country to come out of nowhere; they seemed unexpected. But not because such eruptions are exceptional or anomalous in themselves; they aren’t. The fact that other working people, in other parts of the country, are taken by surprise is the product of the still undeveloped connections among vanguard militants of a social movement just beginning to find its legs.

Experience over the past year confirms that the numbers of fighters who, whatever the outcome of their own immediate struggles, want to continue fighting and reaching out to others will grow.

Time is running a little faster right now. Tendencies to fight are real, but run ahead of communication and organization. This has always been the case at an early stage in the rise of renewed working-class resistance.

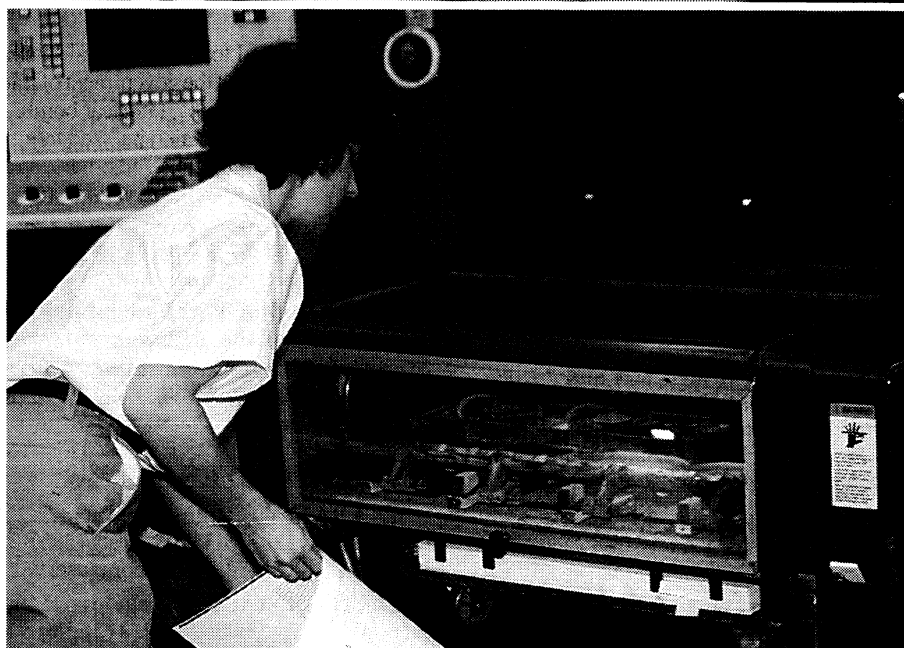
The party needs to structure itself to be best able to respond in a timely way to the opportunities and obligations to struggle and discuss together with workers, farmers, and youth, and draw them toward the communist movement. It needs to help the Young Socialists become the kind of organization able to attract militants and recruit them to a revolutionary youth organization. During a retreat, when there are fewer such opportunities, a revolutionary party can also more easily withstand missing some of them, so long as it doesn’t lose its communist program. “But when a shift in the class struggle makes it possible for the party to begin transforming itself and becoming blood and bone of a proletarian movement, elements of which are moving forward and toward each other, it can’t recover if it lets the opportunities slip through its hands.” Other currents in the workers movement will reach in, recruit, and become an obstacle to the influence of revolutionary workers and youth.

Today, the members of every SWP branch and branch organizing committee can help begin a revolution in the habits of functioning of the party, in order to become more deeply integrated in the growing layers of vanguard fighters in the country.

Every union fraction and party unit can

Continued on page 14

Pathfinder volunteers ready new titles for Havana Book fair



Militant/ top: Greg McCartan, middle: Brian Taylor, bottom: Hilda Cuzco
Various stages in production of new Pathfinder books. Top photo shows volunteers checking index to set final manuscript of *El desorden mundial del capitalismo*, the Spanish edition of *Capitalism’s World Disorder*. Middle shot shows sheetfed operator preparing to print signatures of *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*. Operator in bottom picture inspects new book after it has been bound.

Dairy farmers protest across Northeast

Continued from front page

ucts to only one processor. "I sell to Dean Foods here," he said. "There aren't many producers in this area. You pretty much have to sell to Dean." Logan explained that Dean recently bought Hillside and Ryder, two other milk processors, and then shut down the Hillside plant in Cleveland.

"We have to pay the freight" to have the milk taken to the plant, Logan said. "Every place else the buyer pays the freight. And we don't even have any control over what plant they take it to. We pay about 65 cents per hundredweight to haul the milk."

Tom Yuhasz owns a grain elevator and farms corn and beans. He said, "I have to run this elevator, to store farmers' grain, to keep my farm going. They should let the farmer stay on the farm and let other people have those jobs. Pay the farmer a decent price! This milk is below 1970 prices!"

In Yuhasz's opinion, "The worst one is the Farm Bureau. They just keep saying get bigger. But how much can one guy do?"

One person who came to the protest to support the farmers was Larry Pugh, a locked-out steelworker from AK Steel in Mansfield, Ohio. The 600 workers there have been locked out since the end of August. When asked why he had driven the 135 miles to the rally, Pugh responded, "I volunteer to help anybody who has a problem. Working people are going to have to lock elbows and stand together. I've got 41 years at the mill," continued Pugh, who is 59 years old. "I could retire, but I'm fighting for the young guys."

Many of the farmers were interested in talking to Pugh and took the literature he

passed out about the lockout. He urged them to come to the rally the Steelworkers union is planning for March 25 in Mansfield.

Kit Fogel, a farmer in Marion County, Ohio, said, "This is not a one-day thing. We can't let it be a one-day thing. We've got to keep this up." Robert Cotterman, president of the Ohio Farmers Union in Geauga, Lake, and Ashtabula counties, urged the farmers to participate in upcoming national protests in Washington, DC, on March 20-21.

Twenty people, including five union carpenters, picketed at Crowley Foods in Binghamton, New York. Some of the farmers at this protest pointed to the effect last summer's drought had in worsening an already bad situation for the farmers.

Debra Marvin, from New Milford, Pennsylvania, said she just sold her 60-head herd. "I couldn't afford to keep farming anymore. The cost of buying hay for this winter finally forced the question." It has been about \$165 per ton. In Williamsport, Pennsylvania, more than 50 farmers picketed the Schneider Valley Farms processing plant. A worker came out of the plant on his break and told the farmers, "For what it's worth, I wanted you to know I'm on your side in this."



BY DAVID ROSENFELD AND JOEL BRITTON

BARABOO, Wisconsin—"They steal my milk," said Joel Greeno, the 33-year-old dairy farmer who helped organize a protest outside the head business office of Foremost Farms USA, Wisconsin's largest milk buyer. "They" referred to the processors, handlers,

and retailers who stand between the dairy farmers and the consumers of dairy products, reaping huge profits.

Randy Jasper, who has 100 dairy cows and 300 acres of grain, explained, "For years we were told that California was producing too much milk. This was a way of pitting farmers against farmers. It is the worst thing we have to overcome. It's guys like here," referring to the Foremost Farms corporate office building, "that are the bad guys."

Six farmers, four women, and two men protested for three hours in subfreezing temperatures. They held picket signs and passed out a leaflet explaining the drastically worsening position of dairy farmers and a list of demands.

Greeno and Jasper are leaders of the American Raw Milk Producers Pricing Association (ARMPPA). Greeno called it, "a grass roots effort to rise over and above the federal milk pricing system and to price milk at the farm gate. It is a bargaining tool for the farmer." ARMPPA hopes to bring together dairy farmers around the country and small coops that buy and distribute milk in order to force up the price farmers receive for it.

Currently farmers have no say in the price of their product. According to Greeno, the big milk processors are able to control prices by manipulating the inventory numbers of milk products in storage and creating false "surpluses" through importing dairy products. The farmers are demanding an emergency floor price of \$15.50 per hundredweight price for their milk. Prices fell as low as \$9.63 per hundredweight in December of 1999.

The farmers are also demanding a full public accounting, including the participation of independent farmer inspectors approved by farm activists, of domestic milk production, commercial use, and food storage systems.



BY DON MACKLE

LAFARGEVILLE, New York—More than 50 dairy farmers and their supporters picketed and drove their tractors, pickup trucks, and cars past the entrance to Crowley Foods Inc. in this small town near the Canadian border to press their demand for higher milk prices for farmers.

For more than three hours in the cold and snow the protesters slowed traffic and made it difficult for tanker trucks to enter the milk manufacturing facility. "We don't have anything special against Crowleys," said Jay Burrows, an area dairy farmer. "This was just one close enough for many of us to get to. We'll be visiting some of the others too."

The farmers pulled farm equipment with large signs tied to the side reading, "Why Should Consumers Pay So Much for Dairy Products When Farmers Receive So Little," "We Demand Cost of Production for Our Milk," and "Farmers Receiving Same Price Now as 20 Years Ago."

The handmade signs carried by the picketers said, "Farmers Suffer While Processors get Rich!" "U.S. Gov't Gives Processors Rights to Steal our Milk," and "Consumers Getting Ripped Off as Well as Farmers."

Farmers complained the prices paid for their milk were not keeping up with the costs of farming. "Since the prices for your milk don't go up, but the price of everything else does, you end up going into debt to get more cows to milk to increase your income," said Don Mitchell, a dairy farmer in Hammond.

"You just end up working longer and longer hours, and then you might still not make enough money to hold on."

Tony Prince is a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial, and Textile Employees in Cleveland; Don Mackle is a member of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 174. Kathie Fitzgerald, a member of the United Transportation Union (UTU) in Newark; Mike Galati a UFCW member from New York; and Ruth Robinett, a member of the UTU in New York also contributed to this article.

MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

FLORIDA MIAMI

Defend Affirmative Action. Fri., Feb. 11, 7:30 p.m.

Malcolm X and Revolution. Fri., Feb. 18, 7:30 p.m.

Both events to be held at 4582 NE 2nd Ave. Donation: \$4. Tel: (305) 573-3355.

IOWA DES MOINES

Defend Equal Rights for All Immigrants: Key to Building Labor Solidarity. Panel of activists. Fri., Feb. 11.

Battle Against Racism Today: The Example of the Cuban Revolution. Fri., Feb. 18.

All events to be held at 3720 6th Ave. Program: 7:30 p.m. Dinner: 6:30 p.m. Donation: \$4. Tel: (515) 288-2970.

MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

Black Farmers Fight for Land and Justice. Speaker: Sara Ullman, Socialist Workers Party, and member of United Transportation Union. Fri., Feb. 11, 7:30 p.m. *Codman Square, 683 Washington St., Dorchester. Donation: \$4. Tel: (617) 282-2254.*

— CALENDAR —

CONNECTICUT NEW BRITAIN

Fund-raiser for Todo Connecticut con Vieques. In support of Vieques Rescue & Development. Music and poetry. Sat., Feb. 19, 7:30 p.m. *Criollismo Restaurant, 340 Arch St., Donation: \$15*

GEORGIA ATLANTA

Send-off Rally for the Farmers Trip to Cuba. On February 12, six working farmers will visit Cuba on a fact-finding delegation. Hear: Lee Dobbins, Conyers, Georgia; Willie Head, Pavo, Georgia; Eddie Slaughter, Buena Vista, Georgia; and Gladys Williams, Quitman, Georgia. Fri., Feb. 11, 7:30 p.m. *Emory University, White Hall, Room 101. Sponsored by Atlanta Network on Cuba. For more information, call (404) 377-4980.*

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Join Actions to Demand US Navy Out of Vieques. Wed., Feb. 16, 10:00 a.m., press conference at United Methodist Building, 100 Maryland Ave., N.E., across from U.S. Supreme Court. 4:00 p.m., demonstration in front of the White House, between Lafayette Park and the White House sidewalk. *For more information, access http://www.viequeslibre.org/ or contact the Rev. Eliezer Valentin at (202) 488-5657, or Flavio Cumpiano at (202) 721-4688.*

PENNSYLVANIA PHILADELPHIA

Your Heritage is My Slavery. Speaker: Sam Manuel, participant in the January 17 Martin Luther King Day march in Columbia, S.C., and Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Feb. 11, 7:30 p.m. Dinner: 6:00 p.m. *711 E. Passyunk Ave. (one block below South and 5th streets.) Donation: \$5. Dinner: \$5. (215) 627-1237.*

BRITAIN

LONDON

Section 28: Why it is in the Interests of Working People to Support Gay Rights. Fri., Feb. 11, 7:00 p.m. *47, The Cut. Donation: £2. Tel: 0171-928-7993.*

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CANADA VANCOUVER

Popular Rebellion Shakes Ecuador/Venezuela Faces Social Disaster. Speakers: representative, Organizing Committee for Venezuela Relief; and representative, Communist League. Fri., Feb. 11, 7:30 p.m. *4321 Fraser St. Donation: \$5. Tel: (604) 872-8343.*

NEW ZEALAND

AUCKLAND

The Irish Freedom Struggle. Fri., Feb. 11, 7:00 p.m. *203 Karangahape Rd. Donation: \$3. Tel: (9) 379-3075.*

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WASHINGTON: Seattle: 2533 16th Ave. South. Zip: 98144. Tel: (206) 323-1755. E-mail: 74461.2544@compuserve.com

AUSTRALIA

Sydney: 1st Flr, 176 Redfern St., Redfern NSW 2016. Mailing address: P.O. Box K879, Haymarket Post Office, NSW 1240. Tel: 02-9690-1533. E-mail: 106450.2216@compuserve.com

BRITAIN

London: 47 The Cut. Postal code: SE1 8LL. Tel: 0171-928-7993.

E-mail: 101515.2702@compuserve.com

Manchester: Unit 4, 60 Shudehill. Postal code: M4 4AA. Tel: 0161-839-1766. E-mail: 106462.327@compuserve.com

CANADA

Montreal: 4581 Saint-Denis. Postal code: H2J 2L4. Tel: (514) 284-7369. E-mail: 104614.2606@compuserve.com

Toronto: 851 Bloor St. West. Postal code: M6G 1M3. Tel: (416) 533-4324. E-mail: 103474.13@compuserve.com

Vancouver: 4321 Fraser. Postal code: V5V 4G4. Tel: (604) 872-8343. E-mail: 103430.1552@compuserve.com

FRANCE

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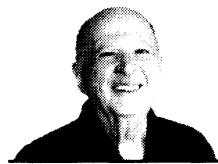
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Organize, brothers and sisters, organize—The *Times* of London reports, "One farmer a week is being driven to suicide by the pressures of maintaining cash flow and



Harry
Ring

dealing with red tape."

Remember, drink lots of water—"A massive pile of radioactive mining wastes sits next to one of Southern California's major sources of drinking water. Every day, radiation and toxic chemical-polluted

water from it is leaching into the Colorado River. The source is a gigantic, 10.5 million ton mountain of uranium mill tailing...near Moab, Utah. The pile is a by-product of 28 years of uranium milling operations."—News item

Keeping their cool—"Medical errors kill thousands, panel says—The toll may be as high as 98,000 yearly, a U.S.-funded report states, and it calls for several [!] reforms."—News headline

'Nothing's too good for our boys'—That was a favorite theme of capitalist politicians addressing World War II GIs. It came to mind on reading the results of a federal study of medical records at the vet-

erans' hospital, covering a two-year period. The probe turned up nearly 3,000 medical "mistakes" and "mishaps," which took the lives of more than 700 patients.

Seize the time—Six bank robberies, not all successful, occurred in San Francisco while the cops were busy staging a mass memorial service for two of their ranks killed in a helicopter crash. Police refused to see a connection. But they conceded the general average is one bank stickup a week.

They do look suspicious—An Immigration and Naturalization Service stakeout in downtown Los Angeles was disrupted when L.A. cops grabbed two of the Immigra-

tion cops. One was released but the other was hospitalized—as one news account delicately put it—for "injuries he received during the encounter."

Think that'll learn 'em?—With the stepped-up anti-immigrant drive, the number of border patrol cops in the San Diego area escalated. And apparently so did the number of immigrants making their way across the ranch area immediately east. Now there are bitter complaints by local ranchers that the Immigration cops are acting like cops—entering private property unannounced, leaving gates unlocked, harassing female motorists, etc. Wailed one rancher: "Now we have more of a problem with [bor-

der cops] than we do with illegals."

That's capitalism—In California, a six-story-high pile of scrap tires caught fire. It took five weeks, \$3 million, and who knows how much damage to the environment to put it out. And, last we heard, authorities were still scratching their heads about the environment.

As we were saying...—To repeat what we said in the last column: Still in rehabilitation from a car accident, we can't, as yet, promise a weekly column. But a stack of items from readers will help speed the process. Send clippings to Pathfinder Bookstore, 2546 W. Pico Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90006. Fax: 213-380-1068. Thanks.

Church lends moral authority to capitalism

The excerpt below is taken from the discussion period of "So Far from God, So Close to Orange County," a talk given at a regional socialist educational conference in Los Angeles, California, over the 1994-95 New Year's weekend. Participants in the conference included members of the Socialist Workers Party branches and industrial union fractions, supporters of the communist movement, revolutionists from other countries, and workers, young people, and others who learned about the event from co-workers on the job or in the course of other struggles. The entire talk appears in *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*. Copyright © 1999 Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission. Subheadings are by the *Militant*.

BY JACK BARNES

The church and church hierarchy in today's world are no longer a social force in and of themselves. They have not been for a long time—not since the rise and consolidation of industrial capitalism. At one time, "the church militant" was an economic power, a ruling-class force in its own right.

from the pages of *Capitalism's World Disorder*

In whole sections of feudal Europe and later in other parts of the world, the church was the dominant holder of landed property. It was the single most powerful force among the landed estates.

That is no longer true, however. It is not true of priests, of bishops, of archbishops, of cardinals, or of the pope. They are not an independent social force; they do not have the power to overthrow social revolutions or reverse mass proletarian struggles. The church remains a ruling-class institution. But church officials function in the class struggle primarily by seeking to lend their moral authority to powerful bourgeois political forces or their agencies. They often offer ideological support to rightist movements, helping to give them a veneer of morality, of eternity, of ritual, of stately pomp. They try to anoint the counterrevolution.

But the church fathers are effective only if the working class and other toilers have no capable revolutionary leadership of their own to help clarify political questions and lead them forward....

All attempts in the modern period to turn religion into some kind of revolutionary ideology are bound to fail. During feudalism, popular movements that rose against oppressive conditions in the countryside and scattered towns and cities—and thus in part against the dominant class power of the church hierarchy—universally adopted a dissenting religious form. Secular revolutionary ideas found the beginnings of a popular echo only in the decades leading up to the American and French revolutions.

With the rise and consolidation of capitalist states and the growth of a modern proletariat, however, all that has changed. That is why liberation theology could never be the dominant outlook of a revolutionary movement. It is not a Marxist form of religion; it is a form of religion whose proponents, involved in various social struggles, attempt to graft onto it all kinds of ideas, including some borrowed from Marxism.

But to the degree a worker or peasant or young person who starts down this road gets more deeply involved in revolutionary politics, to that degree they will sooner or later begin looking for clearer ways to explain the class forces they are confronting and more effective ways to advance the struggle and win. And to the degree anybody remains faithful to the church, to that degree they will over time prefer sticking to the Roman rites without all the political add-ons.

Communists join with all fighters

The revolutionary workers movement opposes attempts to combine religion and politics through the back door. There is no way to carry the day in the church hierarchy for such an effort either. That is not how the bishops, archbishops, and cardinals got where they are. They are not a social force in their own right, but they are bourgeois figures in the epoch of imperialist decay.



Pope John Paul II meets with Clinton in St. Louis, Missouri, 1999. Members of church hierarchy "are not a social force in their own right, but they are bourgeois figures in epoch of imperialist decay."

Of course, communist workers will work and fight shoulder to shoulder with any individual as an equal in a common struggle, no matter what his or her beliefs or other

views. We never quiz fellow fighters about their religious beliefs, nor do we push to be quizzed about ours. And we never let any such beliefs be a barrier to practical work together.

What's more, communists are absolutely opposed to the coarse and cynical measures taken by Stalinist regimes to attempt to force people to drop their religious beliefs, or change them through "ideological struggle" or "reeducation." Over time, as people go through a range of experiences in the class struggle, many come to change their views on religion and other questions. In the future, during the transition to socialism, as all human relations undergo revolutionary change, the social conditions that gave rise to religion will wither away along with private property, the state, the family, and other institutions of class-divided society.

There will no longer be a social basis for institutions, beliefs, and forms of regimentation and moral authority inherited from earlier class society in order to maintain a propertied minority in power.

1. In a 1909 article on "The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion," Lenin wrote: "No educational book can eradicate religion from the minds of masses who are crushed by capitalist hard labor, and who are at the mercy of the blind destructive forces of capitalism, until those masses themselves learn to fight this root of religion, fight the rule of capital in all its forms, in a united, organized, planned and conscious way....

A Marxist must be a materialist, i.e., an enemy of religion, but a dialectical materialist, i.e., one who treats the struggle against religion not in an abstract way, not on the basis of remote, purely theoretical, never-varying preaching, but in a concrete way, on the basis of the class struggle which is going on in practice and is

educating the masses more and better than anything could." V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 15, pp. 406-7. Also see Lenin's 1905 article, "Socialism and Religion," in *CW*, vol. 10, pp. 83-87.

As for the Stalinists' attempts to forcibly "re-educate" religious believers, Frederick Engels had pointed out long before, in 1874, "that persecution is the best means of promoting undesirable convictions! This much is for sure: the only service that can be rendered to God today is to declare atheism a compulsory dogma." See "Programme of the Blanquist Commune Refugees," Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 24, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1989), pp. 12-18.

— 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —

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February 14, 1975

Violence erupted Jan. 20 at the Rosebud coal mine in Hanna, Wyo., when police attacked a picket line set up by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA).

In a scene reminiscent of union-busting drives decades ago, state police fired their weapons into the air and ordered the miners to lie face down on the ground or be shot.

Forty-four pickets were arrested and held in the Wyoming State Prison for 24 hours.

A court injunction limits the number of pickets to four, a ruling that the UMWA plans to appeal.

Rosebud miners have been threatened with firing if they do not report to work. Some have even been picked up by police at their homes, taken to the mine, and ordered to work.

THE MILITANT
PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE
NEW YORK, N.Y. FIVE (5) CENTS

February 13, 1950

The action of the CIO United Steel Workers in sending \$500,000 for relief of the coal miners is a welcome first step in labor's fight against Truman's Taft-Hartley attack on the mine workers.

This reflects not so much a whole hearted desire by Philip Murray to aid the miners as the mounting pressure of the CIO rank and file. They feel a deep sense of solidarity with the miners and know that a defeat for the UMW will open the way for an offensive against their own unions.

At the first threat of the use of the Taft-Hartley Law, all American labor should rise as one to fight this deadly menace to their rights and liberties. All that is needed is a signal from the AFL and CIO leaders. But that signal has been withheld.

for further reading

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Join with militants and build proletarian party

Continued from Page 11

help bring the third campaign for the turn toward a successful conclusion—increasing the numbers of sewing-machine operators in the party and strengthening their presence in UNITE; expanding the numbers of packing-house workers and the party's activity in the UFCW; rebuilding a UMWA fraction through getting more socialist workers into coal mining jobs; and deepening the party's involvement in struggles by proletarian layers in the countryside. Along this course, collaboration with the Young Socialists to help it recruit on the campuses, in high schools, and in the factories will also be a measure of our success.

In the process, such work will more and more become the norm for party units, and the proletarian character of

various industries and regions of the country, the size of the median party branch is becoming smaller. There is a convergence between the activity of more established party units in major cities, and the branch organizing committees of fewer than five members. The organizing committees can more easily see their own future ways of functioning—after they've recruited a couple of workers and youth—in the weekly rhythm of activity of party branches that now more often today have seven, 10, or perhaps a few more members.

As this process develops, many branches are discussing moving to smaller headquarters, more fitted to their current political needs and financial resources. In beginning to look for new facilities, Barnes said, it's important for each branch member to ask: "What kind of headquar-

ters should we have, as the unit in this city of a centralized nationwide party, the Socialist Workers Party? How can we put the needs of the party, not one of its local units, first?"

ters should we have, as the unit in this city of a centralized nationwide party, the Socialist Workers Party? How can we put the needs of the party, not one of its local units, first?"

Always begin with politics, with the class struggle, Barnes said. Think politically. Start with the party. That's the best guide to determining the criteria for what kind of headquarters and bookstore any branch currently needs and can afford.

The party's hall must be a launching pad for political work, a place where party members, Young Socialists, and contacts can come back after a sale or demonstration to discuss what happened and make plans for the next activities. A place where books and pamphlets are sold; where public forums are held; where working people and youth can have a cup of coffee, and sometimes even a meal, over a relaxed political discussion.

Working with party supporters

The number of organized party supporters has increased over the past two years, Barnes pointed out, and the potential to expand those numbers remains. Most important, the party's National Committee reaffirmed at the meeting, the leverage of the contribution these supporters can make to the communist movement is greatest when they are organized to advance national party priorities and needs, not to make up somehow for the stretch of a local unit.

That's why the two central activities of party supporters are participating in the Pathfinder Reprint Project—in which some 150 volunteers are converting all of Pathfinder's books and pamphlets into digital form, so they can be kept in print and made more attractive and readable, in a more cost-effective manner—and organizing regular monthly financial contributions to the party.

The National Committee reiterated that every unit of the party should organize regular, basically monthly, meetings with supporters to initiate political discussion on what the party is doing nationally and how their efforts are helping to advance this work. Less than half of party branches reported they had been regularly holding such meetings with supporters.

The National Committee also proposed that branches give favorable consideration to inviting to the next supporters meeting anyone who a member of the branch believes should be drawn into this work. Branches should be working to involve more supporters as volunteers in the reprint project, and to maintain and expand the regular monthly financial pledges.

Expanding political arsenal

The effort by the reprint project volunteers is part of the ongoing production by Pathfinder of new books and pamphlets for use by communist workers and youth in their daily political work.

As the SWP National Committee was meeting in late January, three new books were in the final stages of production. The Spanish translation of *Capitalism's World Disorder—El desorden mundial del capitalismo*—has just been printed, making this book available to those in the United States and throughout the Americas whose first language is Spanish.

In addition, *Che Guevara Talks to Young People* is now off the presses—the first time Pathfinder has virtually simultaneously produced a book in English and Spanish. And a new edition of *Making History: Interviews with Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces* has been released, with a new preface by Commander of the Revolution Juan Almeida.

All of these titles, plus the new year 2000 Pathfinder catalog, will be featured at the Pathfinder booth at the February 9-15 Havana Book Fair, an international event held in Cuba every two years. There will be special book launchings during the fair of the Spanish and English editions of *Che Guevara Talks to Young People* and *Making History*.

Casa Editora Abril, a Cuban publishing house associated with the Union of Young Communists, cooperated with Pathfinder in compiling the speeches published in *Che Guevara Talks to Young People* and will participate

Recruiting young socialists

Several participants in the January meeting of the SWP National Committee stressed the importance of party branches working with the Young Socialists in their area—whether there is a functioning YS chapter, or just one or two YS members—as a national organization that shares the party's proletarian political perspectives but is a separate organization. Formal relations between the two organizations, through their structures on a national and local level, is decisive, if the party is to help the Young Socialists recruit to its own ranks and develop cadre for the communist movement.

"There is only one reason," Barnes said, "to build a fighting proletarian political organization: that is to lead a mighty revolution to take power from the hands of the capitalist exploiters.

"That is reason enough to join the Young Socialists and the Socialist Workers Party."

—EDITORIALS—

A worker-farmer alliance

Dairy farmers in the Northeast struck a blow for all working people this week by launching a protest campaign against the historically low prices they are receiving for milk. As these family farmers describe, they are caught in a squeeze between the high cost of inputs needed to farm, and having to sell their milk to monopolies that seek to maximize profits on their backs.

Like other small farmers, dairy farmers are being driven into debt slavery at an increasing rate. For the labor movement it is a life-and-death question to champion the demands of these farmers, join the fight to stop farm closures, and insure every farmer who wants to farm can do so.

A striking feature of the dairy farmers' actions, and of the appeal by farm organizations to the AFL-CIO to support the March 21 Rally for Rural America in Washington, D.C., is the decision to search out allies among union members and their organizations, progressive groups, and other fighting sections of the population. Labor needs to respond to this initiative and invite farm activists to union meetings, picket lines, and solidarity rallies to deepen the alliance.

Many farmers are acting on the belief that not only is the problem they face a deep one, but that others who work and toil for a living are in the same condition. While the forms of capitalist exploitation of farmers and wage workers differ, we share a common existence as people who own nothing but the ability to sell our labor or the fruits of our labor to the owners of factories, mills, mines, and agribusiness.

This up-tick in meetings, rallies, and protest actions by farmers will be welcomed by workers who are also waging determined struggles, from steelworkers at AK Steel and Ormet Aluminum, to dockworkers in Charleston and elsewhere. The struggles of workers and farmers have the potential to reinforce each other, and help stamp the character of the newly emerging proletarian movement.

In his State of the Union address, President William Clinton, in pointing to the crisis facing family farmers, said that "we must work together to strengthen the farm safety net." The growing actions by farmers and workers, and the tendency to search each other out as allies, helps put the lie to the idea promoted by Clinton and other Democrats and Republicans that "we" is everyone in the United States.

It is becoming more clear that for working people "we" is all those who work and toil for a living—the vast majority—and our allies among all those oppressed by class society and imperialist domination. "They" are the multimillionaire ruling families and the parties that serve them, the Democrats and Republicans.

By joining together in revolutionary struggle "we" can bring to bear the tremendous potential power of working people, and fight for a government of workers and farmers.

our activity, and of our habits of response and organization, will be reinforced.

At the weekend meeting, the SWP National Committee—along with invited participants from a number of party branches and branch organizing committees, and a leadership delegation from the Young Socialists National Executive Committee—discussed the next steps to expand the numbers and the effectiveness of the contributions by supporters of the party, as well as to work with the Young Socialists as an independent organization through centralized channels established by each organization.

To accomplish this, relations within the basic units of the party—the branches—must change. During the retreat of the past decade, branch executive committees—described in the party's constitution as bodies "elected by the membership of the branch" and "subordinate to" it—more and more in practice became the "highest body" of the unit. They often failed to function as bodies whose responsibility it was to help the membership carry out branch meeting decisions through a structure of other branch committees, institutions, and assignments—to organize sales of the communist press; to maintain a bookstore and a stock of revolutionary literature to take out to street corners, campuses, and political activity; to organize party finances; to plan a weekly program of public political forums; and so on.

Continuity of union fractions

Just prior to the National Committee meeting, Barnes wrote a letter to the elected leadership committee of socialists who work in coal mines, who had held their first meeting in Pittsburgh two weeks earlier. Among other proposals, Barnes suggested they change their name from "coal miners fraction" to the United Mine Workers fraction.

At the time, all eight socialists working in coal mines were in nonunion situations. Nonetheless, Barnes said, we must always keep to the forefront "the continuity of the union fraction in mining the communist party has been working to build since our founding in this country following the victory of the October Revolution and the formation of the Communist International.

"That union orientation," he wrote, "determines the political character of the work and strategic orientation of the worker-bolsheviks who make up the fraction, regardless of how many comrades at a given time have been able to achieve our goal of getting UMWA jobs.

"As you know," Barnes added, "we face comparable situations given our progress in the UNITE and UFCW national fractions, even if the numbers and balance of comrades in union and nonunion jobs is currently different in each of the three."

Barnes also underlined the importance of the party's national Trade Union Committee (TUC) giving top priority to systematic work with the elected steering committees of the industrial union fractions. This is the only help the TUC can give the fractions in organizing as centralized national structures to carry out party policy through the channels of the industrial unions in which they function. Previously, the TUC was tending to work with the steering committee organizers on an episodic basis, rather than systematically with the steering committees as a whole.

"The corruption of reducing the Trade Union Committee's relation to the fraction steering committees to its relation to the organizers of the steering committees," Barnes wrote, "is similar to the relinquishing of the branch's powers and responsibilities to the branch executive committee. It results from the same cause—the retreat. It heads in the same direction—'streamlined' petty-bourgeois administration, replacing 'cumbersome' political centralization.

"And it involves the same trade-off," Barnes concluded. "The branch membership and the steering committee relinquish powers and are relieved of responsibilities; they establish a silent, if occasionally sullen, codependency."

As the party reorganizes its structure and extends its geographic spread to respond to struggles by workers in

Overnite workers in it for long haul

BY JASON ALESSIO

SACRAMENTO, California—"We're past the point of no return. We're committed to this," said Brent Morris, a member of Teamsters Local 150 on strike against Overnite Trucking and one of four people staffing the picket line in front of the company's gate.

"This is not an Overnite fight. It's a Teamsters' fight. Every freight member's future is on the line with this fight," Morris said.

"We're in this for the long haul," added Don Fletcher, a Teamster member who works at ABF and regularly joins the picket line.

Chris Stanton, a Teamster who works at Yellow Freight in Sacramento, also joined the picket line. He pointed out that if he were out on strike he would like to see solidarity by other truckers, which is why he wants to join in on a more consistent basis.

Some 2,000 drivers, dockworkers, and maintenance workers across the United States began an unfair labor practices strike against Overnite at the end of October. Overnite is the sixth largest trucking com-

pany in the United States and the largest one that is unorganized.

The workers here said nine Teamsters members are out on strike and 15 have crossed the picket line. They also believe that the company is running a full crew based on the number of trucks that are coming in each day.

The pickets estimated that every day about 20 people in cars stop by during their 6:00 a.m. to noon shift to show their support and talk. UPS workers from Rockland donated turkeys for Christmas and have brought donuts to the line.

Two days before, more than 75 people joined a rally near the gate as part of national actions organized by the Teamsters. Workers from other Teamsters locals and those who work at Consolidated Freightways, ABF, and Roadway came out to show their solidarity.

Five years ago 90 percent of the workers at the Sacramento terminal voted to be represented by the Teamsters union. Since then, the company has unfairly written up union supporters, charging them with driving six



Militant/Patti Iiyama

Overnite strikers and supporters rally in Memphis last December

miles an hour where the speed limit is five. The company has used such pretexts to fire union activists and hire other workers who don't openly support the union.

The Overnite company has hired security personnel who constantly monitor the gate. They won an injunction limiting the picket lines to five people.

There are usually about three workers in

front of the company gate from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., a smaller number than in the beginning. The strikers have not been able to do as many "ambulatory pickets" as before, where they follow a scab truck and picket at the delivery or pickup site. The strikers said that they could use more support on the line so that they can return to doing more regular ambulatory pickets.

Report confirms Kaiser responsible for plant explosion

BY PATTI IIYAMA

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama—Whitney Jasmin, a locked-out member of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) in Gramercy, Louisiana, welcomed the 21 citations issued against Kaiser Aluminum by the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) January 7.

"We had anticipated this, because we said all along that Kaiser was running this plant unsafely and dangerously with poorly trained replacements after they locked us out," he said in a recent telephone interview. "We were surprised, though, that they were cited for only 21 violations, when they could have been cited for so many more."

The citations stemmed from MSHA's investigation of the July 5, 1999, explosion that destroyed most of Kaiser's alumina refinery in Gramercy, injuring 20 employees and damaging windows in the surrounding area. The plant has been closed since then. MSHA charged the company with serious violations of mandatory safety standards and other regulations, 13 of the 21 being the most severe kind of citation the agency can issue. Some of the cited violations include inoperative pressure valve systems, blocked pressure relief piping, routine operation of pressure vessels beyond their design capacity, inadequate safety training, and lack of proper protective equipment.

In addition, Kaiser was charged with seven counts of impeding or interfering with MSHA's investigation. "Company personnel refused to testify, taking the fifth amendment, so MSHA couldn't find out who ordered all the heater valves to be closed," Jasmin said. "They could have gotten jail

time. Plus the company tried to withhold information and restrict the investigation to certain areas of the plant."

Jasmin reported that on January 12 Kaiser was granted a permit by the parish government to rebuild the plant. "Kaiser got the site cleaned up and shipped out all the scrap to metal reprocessing plants, but they needed a permit to put in the pilings for foundations. The local government is losing around \$30,000 a month in tax revenues from the plant, and there's been an unemployment crisis in the area with over 300 workers permanently laid off from Agrico, a fertilizer

plant, and more from a Freeport plant. So the parish government, even though they claim that they want to get the local people back to work at Kaiser, easily granted them the permit to rebuild."

USWA members at Kaiser struck in September 1998 over cuts in retiree health insurance benefits, seniority, job security, pensions, and wages. A year ago they offered to return to work while continuing to negotiate, but the company locked them out. Since then the 2,900 USWA members at five plants in Gramercy, Louisiana; Newark, Ohio; and Spokane and Tacoma, Washing-

ton, have continued the struggle. Kaiser has been operating the plants with management and replacement workers.

The company met with the union negotiating team in mid-January. This is the first time that they have met since negotiations broke down in August over Kaiser's demand that the union agree to contracting out 239 jobs, or 8 percent of the total work force.

"But we're going to continue sending out our Road Warriors until this lockout is settled," said Jasmin, referring to union members who spread word of the fight and picket company offices around the country.

Airline 'doesn't want us to think for ourselves'

BY TOM FISKE

MINNEAPOLIS—Flight attendants at Northwest Airlines (NWA) are responding to the January 5 ruling by U.S. District Judge Donovan Frank granting the company a temporary restraining order against their union, Teamsters Local 2000. The judge prohibited the union from "calling, permitting, instigating, authorizing, encouraging, participating in, approving of, or continuing any disruption of Northwest Airlines' normal airline operations" and said union officials must immediately take "all reasonable steps within their power" to prevent flight attendants from falsely calling in sick.

Last fall the flight attendants rejected a new company contract offer by a 2-to-1 margin. Leading up to the vote, the Teamster members held a wide-ranging discussion in union meetings and over the Internet,

set up information booths, and organized rallies about the issues in their fight.

One comment on a flight attendant web site said of the judge's ruling, "First amendment. [Web site sponsor] is a private company. Anything can be said on it."

Karen Schulz, a veteran flight attendant at NWA, said in an interview that use of Internet web sites by flight attendants helped "counter misinformation and to know what the union is doing. Flight attendants should be able to say what they want. One worker from Los Angeles is named in the lawsuit simply because of what he said on the Internet. What the company doesn't want is for flight attendants to think for themselves."

The secretary-treasurer of the union, Danny Campbell, said in an interview that the company investigation of certain sick calls is an attempt to intimidate the union

and weaken solidarity.

George Martinez, a cleaner at NWA, pointed to the use of the court by the company as a propaganda weapon against the union. He has worked 10 years at Northwest and put in 13 years at Eastern Airlines before going on strike at that carrier. "There is a definite parallel with what is happening to the flight attendants and what happened to us at Eastern Airlines," he said. "[Eastern CEO Frank] Lorenzo tried to use the courts to win public opinion. He tried to make it appear that the judge was impartial, but there was no impartiality there. Of course the judge was on the side of the company. Every decision was Lorenzo's. Today, the same rules apply, only this time at Northwest."

Tom Fiske is a member of Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association Local 33.

LETTERS

On scandal in Germany

On a recent National Public Radio broadcast, prominent German journalist Joseph Joffe compared the current scandal surrounding former Chancellor Helmut Kohl in Germany to Nixon's Watergate. I think this is an accurate comparison, though not for the reasons Joffe intended. Just as Watergate had very little to do with an office break-in and much to do with the political tensions flowing from the defeat of U.S. imperialism in Vietnam, so too the current crisis in Germany has little to do with financial payoffs of top capitalist politicians, although this is the form it takes.

Underlying this form, however, are the growing tensions and frustrations in the German ruling class flowing from two important failures.

First is the fact that Germany and the other imperialist powers lost the Cold War. For Germany specifically, this has meant a decade of

being reunited with the eastern portion of Germany, which remains to this day a workers state. Even in the context of the longest economic upturn in recent capitalist history, German capital has made little progress in transforming social and property relations in the east. "Privatizing" eastern industry has consisted primarily of (1) shutting down large portions of it, combined with massive unemployment and make-work payments of various types, and (2) giving away (with massive additional subsidies) to private capitalists those industrial sectors (primarily steel, chemicals, and shipbuilding) where working-class resistance initially blocked option 1.

The second, and growing, crisis looming for the German imperialism is its deepening weakness in the context of growing trade tensions as against its main rival—the U.S. capitalist class. The relative military weakness of the various European

powers—starkly highlighted in last year's attack on Yugoslavia—points to the continuing inability of German capital to defend and advance its interests through the necessary means of military power.

There is more involved, however, in the very real crisis engulfing the German Christian Democratic Union than the problems of German capital alone. This is evidenced by the crisis across Europe of the conservative parties—in Italy, Britain, France, and now Germany. It appears to me that the Socialist/Social Democratic/Labor parties in these countries have moved far enough to the right that they now occupy much of the political space formerly taken by the conservatives—who are now floundering for a separate voice.

Robert Dees
Palo Alto, CA

Nuclear rogue

As you point out in your edito-

rial "Washington: the nuclear rogue," whether the U.S. government successfully tests its antimissile missile next time or not, they'll "continue to pour resources into achieving their target of a first-strike nuclear capacity."

And in case this particular "Ground-Based Interceptor" doesn't pan out, the government is pursuing another method of "shielding" U.S. imperialism—an airborne laser system.

The Boeing Company—"lead system integrator" for the antimissile missile—is developing a high-energy laser mounted on a modified 747 freighter capable, according to press reports, of aiming, firing, and striking a missile within 5 seconds of being detected. Boeing will collect \$113 million to produce the first airborne laser airplane.

Seven Boeing 747's will be built to carry these high-energy weapons, with the first plane to be delivered for operation testing in

2002. The first "lethal demonstration" is scheduled to take place in 2003.

Boeing manager Brad Gorsuch, who is overseeing the project in Wichita, explained how beneficial the program is—to the owners of Boeing: "You get a commercial sale, and the 747 is a big sale. We ultimately get to maintain the aircraft, plus we get to modify it in Wichita. And we get mission support for 20 years." Nothing like a hefty profit to sweeten the pot for the war industries!

Scott Breen
Seattle, Washington

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of general interest to our readers.

Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Protesters in London demand 'No more Bloody Sundays, troops out now!'

BY HARRY ROBINSON
AND BERNADETTE CAMPBELL

LONDON—"British justice, no justice!"; "No more Bloody Sundays! Troops out now!"; and "No guns, no nail bombs, let the truth be told!" chanted 600 demonstrators at a march and rally here January 22 to commemorate the anniversary of the Bloody Sunday massacre.

The action is held each year to press demands against the British government. On Jan. 30, 1972, British army soldiers opened fire on Irish nationalist fighters who were holding a peaceful march in Derry, Northern Ireland, to demand civil rights. Thirteen

people were gunned down, and another died later of his wounds. This year the march focused on the demand for justice for the victims of the massacre and for the government to tell the truth about why they unleashed the lethal assault.

The chant about the guns and nail bombs, for example, is in reference to the fact that in the wake of the assault, leading officers in the army tried to slander the demonstrators in Derry, calling them gunmen and nail bombers.

A good number of working people and youth turned out for the march. Brian, a worker at Glaxo Wellcome in East London,

said that he had joined picket lines of Skycheffs workers locked out at Heathrow airport. "It's important to go out on these demonstrations, to show solidarity," he stated.

Sandie Casey and Tracie Duggan, both young women, said they would have been born and brought up in Ireland if there hadn't been the conflict caused by British occupation and division of Ireland. "That's why this Bloody Sunday issue isn't just about history. It's about today," Duggan said.

"We have to ensure that one day in our lifetime things will be different," said Brigid O'Neil, a student from California studying in London. She had seen a flier and decided

to join the action. "This is the first time I've been on a demonstration about any issue," she said. "It's great. I wanted to be part of this because we're making history. It's important that Americans support this. We don't get told the truth and I'm learning by seeing history live." O'Neil, whose parents are of Irish descent, added, "The more I find out about Ireland the more I've gotten interested in other issues of oppression."

Demonstrators marched past the Downing Street residence of Prime Minister Anthony Blair and ended with a rally at the University of London Students Union. Speakers at the rally reflected aspects of the fight for justice and the broader fight for Irish self-determination.

Paul Doherty is the son of Patrick Doherty, who was shot in the back during the massacre while stewarding the demonstration. He told the crowd that ordinary people who stood up for civil rights were not decorated, but instead vilified as gunmen by the British government. He vowed the fight for justice will continue until the truth about the massacre and its subsequent cover-up by the British government is told.

Sinn Fein councilor for Newry in South Armagh, Conor Murphy, said the 1972 Derry march was an example of Irish nationalists—those in favor of the unification of the country free from British rule—in Northern Ireland starting to demand their rights, rather than asking favors from London. The British government's response was to try to teach the "natives" a lesson, he said, with state-sanctioned assault and murder.

The Sinn Fein leaders said London should be establishing a timetable for demilitarization in Northern Ireland, but instead British military activity in his constituency has increased.

Murphy explained that Nationalists want to destroy the system of sectarianism in Northern Ireland. They will continue to raise demands for their rights, and will stand by the relatives in their fight for the truth to be told about the Bloody Sunday massacre.

Harry Robinson and Bernadette Campbell are members of the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union in Manchester.

New Zealand meat workers say union is stronger after fight

BY TERRY COGGAN

INVERCARGILL, New Zealand—Meat workers at the Alliance Group's Lorneville plant returned to the job January 25 having beat back a serious attack by the company.

For more than five weeks some 1,000 workers refused to start the lamb killing season at New Zealand's largest sheep and lamb processing plant under the onerous contract proposed by the company.

The company's original demands added up to what a local newspaper, the *Southland Times*, called "a drastic shift" in workers' wages and conditions on the job. The Alliance Group proposed to operate the plant with three chains (lines) working three 10-hour shifts, keeping the plant open around the clock six days a week and increasing the kill rate from 3,500 sheep and lambs in an eight-hour shift, to 5,000 in 10 hours.

The bosses also wanted the workers to take a 4.5 percent wage cut and to agree to merging seniority lists between workers from Lorneville and the closed plant at nearby Makarewa.

This is the first season shift work has been introduced for workers on the slaughterboard (kill floor) at Alliance meat processing plants. In May last year workers at the nearby Mataura plant accepted management proposals and started on shifts this season. A worker leaving that plant said the union struggle at Lorneville "goes to show you don't have to accept what management tells you."

In a series of meetings over December and January, the workers, members of the New Zealand Meat Workers Union, let the bosses know their opposition to the measures. After a meeting January 6, some 1,000 workers marched on the Alliance Group's head office in Invercargill to deliver what the *Southland Times* described as "a resounding no" to the company's proposals.

Work began after the company agreed to run four chains over two eight-hour shifts for five days a week, with Saturday morning work if required. The eight-hour shift maintains the 3,500 kill rate, which can increase to 4,000 in nine hours without overtime pay when required.

Most workers see this arrangement as an important concession by the company. Charlie Hay said in an interview that the union "came out stronger than the company." After only a week on the job a night-shift worker explained, "It is not over yet. The company is already trying to renege on things."

The company also dropped its plans to merge the seniority lists, despite the fact that a government employment tribunal had endorsed the move. It also backed off its threatened wage cut, although final wage levels remain to be settled between the company and the union. Workers explained there was an average 2.25 percent pay cut which varies according to department.



A 1,000-strong contingent of meat workers and their supporters marched to Alliance Group bosses' headquarters January 6 to say "a resounding no" to company attacks.

Steelworkers in Ohio rebuild torched picket shack at Ormet

BY SALM KOLIS
AND CHRIS REMPLE

HANNIBAL, Ohio—Steelworkers here are organizing a rally to press their fight for a contract with Ormet Aluminum and to rebuild their picket shack, which was burned down January 20. Workers explain that although the company has 24-hour video surveillance of their picket site, there is a gap in the tape for the period when the fire started.

The picket shack was a source of pride for the members of United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Locals 5724 and 5760. It consisted of a large room with a wood stove, a generator to power lights and a microwave oven, and restaurant seating on a deck on the roof of the shack. It was festooned with black plastic and wooden rats, the workers' symbol for Ormet management. Union members hung signs on the outside, including in solidarity with locked-out steelworkers at AK Steel and with demands for a contract.

The contract between Ormet and the USWA expired last May. Workers have been organizing picketing at the gates three times a day ever since. Steelworkers march in and out of the plant at shift change chanting union slogans.

Unionists at the plant took up a collection to rebuild the shack and said that other materials were donated. Steelworkers from Ravenswood and coal miners from the area plan to join Ormet workers here February 3 to rebuild the shack and hold a rally to sup-

port the fight.

The company walked out of negotiations January 22, but workers on the picket line report they have made progress on their demands. "This contract offer is much better than the company was offering three months ago," one picket said. "Metal prices are up. He [CEO Emmett Boyle] needs a contract."

The new proposal includes a \$1.92 wage increase and other "additives" over the life of the contract in place of a cost-of-living allowance (COLA). One of the main union demands is to reinstate COLA, which the company took away in 1986. According to a union flyer being distributed at the plant gates, the company also "reneged on paying retroactive pension supplements to our retirees back to June 1, 1999."

Donny Blatt, Local 5724 grievance committee chair, promised a stepped-up campaign to get a contract, pointing to a demonstration by retirees at the company headquarters in Wheeling, West Virginia. "We are going to escalate this thing until Ormet comes back to the table and we get a fair contract," he said.

About 25 workers went to West Liberty College in Wheeling, West Virginia, January 21, to confront Boyle, who was speaking on the campus. Steelworkers chanting "No contract, no peace!" were joined by a number of students from the campus.

Chris Remple is a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial, and Textile Employees.

USWA wins strike at Mirolin in Toronto

BY MARIA ISABEL LEBLANC
AND JOHN STEELE

TORONTO—"We won," United Steelworkers of America (USWA) member Edgar Chete told the Militant Labor Forum January 23. USWA members at the Mirolin bathtub factory struck the company on December 13.

The 240 workers forced the company to grant a 9.5 percent wage increase and improvements in the dental and medical benefits package, Chete reported. The new contract was approved by a 98 percent margin. Chete explained that the strikers won because of their solidarity and success in stopping production. The bosses tried to keep production going with about 30 scabs, including office workers. They did their best to intimidate and divide workers, but strong picket lines and support by local unions won the day for the union.

"When we got the union in, most of the workers were from Latin America," said Chete who is originally from Guatemala. "The company decided not to hire any more Latin Americans so they hired people from China and Vietnam. That's the majority in the plant now. That was a big mistake because they were the strongest fighters. We don't speak the same language but we understand each other."

John Steele is a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 175.